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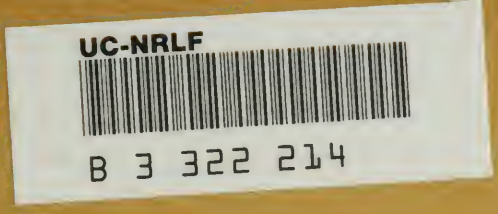

MISS HOBBS

BY

JEROME K. JEROME

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Price, 30 Cent

(The Above Are Subject to Royalty When Produced)

MISS HOBBS

A Comedy in Four Acts

BY

MR. JEROME K. JEROME

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MISS HOBBS.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The drawing-room of the* KINGSEARLS' *house at Newhaven, (New York,) an old-fashioned brick-built house. A large semicircular bay window at back looks out upon the other side of a typical country-house street. There is only one door to the room up* L., *above the fireplace. When the curtain rises the room is empty and in darkness, the blinds being drawn down. (N. B. The room is on the first floor.) The clock on the mantelpiece strikes ten, then the door opens and enter* MISS SUSAN ABBEY, *shown in by* CHARLES. *She is an elderly maiden lady, a cheerful, bustling soul. She wears her hair in curls each side of her head—is wearing a bonnet and carries a small hand-bag.* CHARLES, *a lad of fifteen, wears a pair of flannel trousers and a yachting jacket with the collar turned up round his neck.*

MISS A. (*entering, crosses to* C., *stumbles*) Oh, what's that!

CHARLES. (*coming down, picking it up*) Master's hat. He always flings his hat on the floor when he's vexed. (*goes to window* C., *and pulls up blinds; the morning sun streams in*).

MISS A. (R. C.) Have I damaged it?

CHARLES. (*drawing up the blinds*) You've not improved it, ma'am.

MISS A. Where is your master? (*puts bag on table* R. C.)

CHARLES. I don't know, ma'am. He hasn't come home yet.

MISS A. When did he go out? (*crosses a little to* L. C.)

CHARLES. (*comes down* R. *of table* R. C.) Last night, ma'am. (*puts hat on table* R. C.)

MISS HOBBS.

PRODUCED AT THE DUKE OF YORK'S THEATRE, LONDON, DECEMBER 18TH, 1899.

WOLFF KINGSEARL.....*Mr. Herbert Waring*
PERCIVAL KINGSEARL.....*Mr. Allan Aynesworth*
GEORGE JESSOP. .....*Mr. Cosmo Stuart*
CAPTAIN SANDS.....*Mr. J. W. McDonald*
CHARLES. .....*Mr. George Curtiss*
MRS. KINGSEARL..... *Miss Agnes Millar*
MISS SUSAN ABBEY.... .....*Miss Susie Vaughan*
MILLICENT FAREY.....*Miss Ida Veoland*
MISS HOBBS..... .....*Miss Evelyn Millard*

Produced at The Lyceum Theatre, New York, September 7, 1899.

ORIGINAL CAST.

WOLFF KINGSEARL..... .....*Charles Richman*
PERCIVAL KINGSEARL.....*Orrin Johnson*
GEORGE JESSOP.....*Joseph Wheelock, Jr.*
CAPTAIN SANDS..... .....*T. C. Valentine*
CHARLES.....*Francis Sedgwick*
MRS. PERCIVAL KINGSEARL.....*Clara Bloodgood*
MISS SUSAN ABBEY ....*Mrs. G. H. Gilbert*
MILLICENT FAREY..... ....*Mabel Morrison*
MAID SERVANT.....*Elizabeth Rathburn*
HENRIETTA HOBBS.....*Annie Russell*

ACT I. The Drawing Room at the Kingsearls' house at Newhaven (New York).

ACT II. Drawing Room at the Mill House.

ACT III. Cabin of the yacht "Good Chance."

MISS A. Good gracious! Has he been walking about the streets all night?

CHARLES. (R. C.) I can't say, ma'am.

MISS A. Dear, dear, dear, dear! Where's your mistress?

CHARLES. In her room.

MISS A. How does she seem?

CHARLES. She's a bit rocky.

MISS A. A bit rocky?

CHARLES. Upset, ma'am, excited.

MISS A. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, both of them. Not married six months yet, and—(*crosses to* C.) Why haven't you got your livery on, Charles?

CHARLES. (R. C. *sulkily*) I have got it on.

MISS A. You young scoundrel! How dare you stand there and tell me a story, which I can see with my own eyes.

CHARLES. It isn't a story. It's underneath.

MISS A. Then why are you wearing those things over it?

CHARLES. Because I hate the sight of it. Why should I be labelled a slave all over?

MISS A. Oh, you silly child. I have no patience with you. You'll get into trouble when your master comes in. What was the quarrel about?

CHARLES. Between master and mistress, ma'am? Oh, the old thing!

MISS A. Do you mean Miss Hobbs?

CHARLES. Yes, ma'am. It always ends with her, even if it begins a bit fresh.

MISS A. That woman is going to be the curse of all our lives. It's wrong to wish anybody any harm, I know, but if Providence in its mercy could see fit in some painless manner—to—

(*The door opens and enter* BEULA—*she is an exceptionally girlish looking woman—is dressed for going out, carries her gloves in her hand together with a small bag. She enters quietly and slowly, the bag and gloves she lays on table near door, then comes forward and kisses her aunt. She is very pale and red-eyed and carries unmistakably the manner of a person who has been up all night.*)

MISS A. (R. *of* C. *as she kisses* BEULA) My dear child, you are looking half dead.

BEULA. (L. *of* C.) I am not feeling very well. Aunt.

MISS A. I got your note. I dressed and came round immediately. What is it all about?

BEULA. Oh, the old thing!

MISS A. Miss Hobbs?

BEULA. Miss Hobbs is not old.

MISS A. I don't mean that. I mean it was the old quarrel about her.

BEULA. She was dragged into it, of course. If an earthquake happened, poor Miss Hobbs would be at the bottom of it. (*crosses a little to* L.)

MISS A. (*aside*) I wish to goodness one would come along.

BEULA. (*comes back to* C. *quickly*) Just because she's my friend. (*sees* CHARLES, *who is* R. C.) Why haven't you got your livery on, Charles?

CHARLES. (R. C.) I have got it on.

MISS A. (R. *of* C.) He has got it on underneath. He objects to be labelled a slave—so he says, the young idiot!

BEULA. We are all slaves, Charles, of one kind or another. You wear your livery, I mine. (*is turning her wedding ring round—crosses back a little to* L. C.)

MISS A. (C.) Yes, but he don't. You pay for a page, and you have a thing that looks like an early bather that's lost its towel.

CHARLES. (R. C.) I can stand it in the house. I've got accustomed to the gibes of the female servants. It's when I've got to go out I can't bear it. The boys call me Dicky and sprinkle bird seed in front of me.

(*He is a pigeon-breasted youngster. Is picking up the shattered fragments of a wedding-cake ornament which with its broken glass case lies on the floor near side table* R., *he is putting them in the damaged hat which he has brought over for the purpose*)

MISS A. (C.) In another month that boy will expect you to dress him in a frock coat and send him out in the carriage.

BEULA. (L. C.) After this morning it will be somebody else's task to manage him.

MISS. A. Whose?

BEULA. Anybody's. I am leaving this house for ever.

MISS A. (*crosses to her* L. C.) Now don't talk like that, Beula, because you know you don't really mean it.

BEULA. I do mean it. Whenever I say anything I've been thinking over for years and years, somebody says "Oh, you don't mean it." It does make me so mad!

MISS A. You can't have been thinking over it for years and years, you know. You've only been married six months.

BEULA. The sensations of a lifetime can be crowded into six months. Be as quick as you can there, Charles.

CHARLES. It's the glass, ma'am; it's all over the place.

MISS A. But nothing extra has happened? Nothing that hasn't occurred before?

BEULA. Nothing that would not happen again, were I to remain here. He has struck me!

MISS A. (*in amazement*) Struck you! Impossible.

BEULA. (*with a low laugh*) So I should have said six months ago.

MISS A. But this is terrible. Whatever—(*breaks off, hearing a noise outside door* L.)

(*The door opens and enter* PERCIVAL. *He is an exceedingly boyish looking young man of about 22. He likewise bears unmistakable signs of having been up all night, but in addition is untidy, his hat on the back of his head. He looks round room and appears somewhat nervous and doubtful of entering. He lays his hat on table* R. C. *and comes forward to* C.)

PERC. Good morning, Aunt Susan. Good morning, Beula. (*both women return his salutation very stiffly*)

MISS A. Good morning, Percival.

BEULA. Good morning.

(CHARLES *has risen and is crossing in front of table* R. C. *to* C., *with hat full of fragments*)

PERC. (C.) What's all this?

CHARLES. (L. *of table* R. C.) It's the wedding cake ornament, sir, what you overthrew last night. I've just been picking up the bits.

PERC. Can't you find anything else to put them in but my hat?

CHARLES. It was damaged, sir. Miss Abbey, sir, trod on it, sir.

PERC. (C.) Take it downstairs.

CHARLES. (R. *of* C.) Yes, sir. (*is going*)

PERC. Stop! (CHARLES *stops*) Where's your livery?

CHARLES. I just put these things over it, sir, to go out, sir.

PERC. Take them off! (CHARLES *hesitates*) Take

them off this minute! (CHARLES *begins to unbutton, puts hat on chair* L. *of table* R. C.)

MISS A. (L. *of* C.) You are sure you've got the other things on underneath, Charles?

CHARLES. Yes, ma'am. (*takes off the coat, puts it on back of chair until he has taken off trousers, picks up hat, coat and trousers—is going*)

PERC. Don't let me ever see those things again.

CHARLES. No, sir. (*exit*)

PERC. Sit down, Beula, please. I want to speak to you. (BEULA *sits down* L. *in armchair*) Won't you take a chair, Aunt? (*places chair from up* L. *above fireplace for her*) Beula, I owe you an apology.

BEULA. (L.) Oh! To what particular occasion are you referring?

MISS A. (*sitting* L. C.) You can be irritating, Beula.

PERC. (C. *gulping down his feelings*) To last night. I lost my temper. I behaved very rudely.

MISS A. She says you struck her.

PERC. That is rather an exaggerated description of the incident. But technically it is correct. I boxed her ears.

MISS A. It doesn't sound so dreadful put that way. Was it only a box on the ear, Beula?

BEULA. I do not remember the exact spot where the blow fell. (L. *on settee*)

PERC. I really don't think I could have hurt you, Beula.

MISS A. Did he hurt you, Beula?

BEULA. It is not a question of physical pain.

MISS A. Of course not, it was the indignity. But he's very sorry and very much ashamed of himself. You are very much ashamed of yourself, aren't you?

PERC. I admit, that though exposed to an amount of provo——

MISS A. (*interrupting*) Yes, yes, never mind about your exposure. You are very sorry and you ask her forgiveness. (*on chair* L. *of settee*)

PERC. I ask her forgiveness.

MISS A. There you are; he asks you to forgive him, and it's your duty to do it. You forgive him don't you?

BEULA. As you say, Aunt, it is, I suppose, a wife's duty to forgive assaults.

MISS A. There you are! She forgives you! Now that's all over.

PERC. That incident is, I hope, closed.

MISS A. Thank goodness! (*starts to rise,* PERC. *with a motion of the hand prevents her*)

PERC. (C.) And now, Aunt, in your presence, calmly and dispassionately we will discuss the original cause of cleavage between Beula and myself.

MISS A. (*rises*) Don't you think we had better have breakfast first?

BEULA. (*rises and turns to fireplace*) Another breakfast under this roof would choke me.

MISS A. (*crosses to* BEULA, *takes her hand, leads her a little to* L. C.) There's no need to have it under the roof. We can have it in the breakfast parlour. Come along both of you.

PERC. (C. *stops her*) On this one point, Aunt, I find myself in agreement with Beula. Breakfast, after what has happened, would be a farce.

MISS A. Well, as far as I'm concerned, it wouldn't But don't mind me. I've got a few biscuits in my bag. And if you two can discover what you are quarrelling about before breakfast it will be time well spent. (*goes to her bag on table* R. C. *and takes out some gingerbread nuts*) All I was thinking was—Are you, either of you, in a state to discuss anything calmly and dispassionately? (*sits* R. C. *and eats*)

PERC. (*standing* C.) I can answer for myself. And if Beula will not go out of the way to be exasperating—

MISS A. (R. C. *interrupting*) That's a good beginning, that is.

BEULA. (*seated* L.) Oh, do not trouble, Aunt. I am seasoned to insult.

MISS A. (*jumps up*) I really think we had better have breakfast first.

PERC. I beg your pardon, Aunt. I beg yours, Beula. I did not mean to be insulting. (MISS A. *sits again and eats*) I merely want us to understand one another.

BEULA. Percival thinks a wife should be a slave.

MISS A. Preposterous!

PERC. I don't, Aunt. All I say is, a man should be master of his own house.

MISS A. And of his own temper, Percival.

BEULA. Let him be master of his own house. I mean to leave it.

MISS A. Where are you going? I won't have you.

BEULA. I suppose I can die on a doorstep.

MISS A. No, you can't. The police won't allow it. You're a silly child, and Percival's a fool. You haven't any troubles, so you've set to work to make 'em. Each of you wants to boss the other and to have your own way in everything.

BEULA. I don't want my own way. I only want not to be interfered with.

PERC. I should never think of interfering with you if you'd only be sensible.

BEULA. What do you think he did the day before yesterday, Aunt? Took my new bicycling costume and burnt it in the kitchen fire.

PERC. It was one of those beastly bloomer things, Aunt. She looked awful in it.

BEULA. I didn't. Besides that's not the question. I don't dictate to you what clothes you shall wear.

PERC. There was a time when you asked my opinion about your dresses.

BEULA. You used to say I looked well in everything I wore.

PERC. So you did then, before you took all your ideas from that Miss Hobbs of yours.

MISS A. Now we'll never get to breakfast.

BEULA. I can understand you men not liking Miss Hobbs.

PERC. Some disappointed old cat!

BEULA. She knows you!

MISS A. Oh, do come to breakfast!

PERC. She knows you a good deal too well. For the future I forbid you to have any connection with her whatever.

BEULA. (*jumping up*) You forbid me!

PERC. I forbid you—As you will not regard my wishes I must assert my authority. So long as you remain under my roof—

MISS A. (*jumps up*) Oh, drat your roof, both of you! It makes me tired, that roof of yours. Can't you see what an idiot you're making of yourself?

PERC. I can't help it, Aunt, I must speak. That woman is wrecking my life. I forbid Beula to speak to her (*turns to* BEULA L.) to write to her—to hear from her, to—(*the door opens and* CHARLES *appears*) Get out!

CHARLES. (*up* L. C.) Please, sir—

PERC. (*roaring*) Get out!

(CHARLES *dives out of sight, and leaves to view* MISS FAREY, *a girl of about* 19, *a timid pretty girl. She is dressed in mannish walking costume that only succeeds in making her appear by contrast still more childish and feminine*)

MISS F. (*hesitating in doorway*) I am so sorry—I—

BEULA. (*down* L. C.) Oh, this is nothing, dear. Come in.

(MISS F. *enters, comes down* L. C.)

You know my husband?

MISS F. (*advancing and shaking hands with him* L. C.) Oh, yes, we have met.

PERC. (R. *of* C.) More than once, I think.

MISS F. (*with a smile*) Yes, several times.

(PERCIVAL *crosses down back of table to* R. MISS A. *crosses to* R. C.)

(*handing letter to* BEULA) I brought this, dear, in case you might not be in.

(BEULA *opens and reads letter*)

(*turning and shaking hands with* MISS A.) How are you, Miss Abbey? Isn't it a charming morning?

MISS A. (R. C.) Umph! A bit breezy.

PERC. (R. *quickly*) I hope you've come to stop awhile in Newhaven.

MISS F. (C.) Yes; we've taken a house for the summer. We are going to do some yachting.

MISS A. You are with friends then?

MISS F. (*with a laugh*) Well, only with one at present. But some more girls are going to join us later on.

(MISS A. *goes up to back of table* R. C. *with her bag, and comes to* L. *of table* R. C.)

PERC. Oh, that will be jolly. Who is the one friend you've started with? Anyone I know?

MISS F. (C.) Miss Hobbs—you've heard of her.

PERC. (R. C. *after a pause—his whole manner changing*) Miss Hobbs—Miss Henrietta Hobbs?

MISS F. Yes. I am living with her now.

PERC. Miss Farey, you must forgive my apparent rudeness. For you personally I have the greatest regard.

(MISS F., *becoming frightened at his rising tones, backs from him*—BEULA *looks up from her letter*)

But I cannot permit under my—in my house, the companion, the bosom friend of Miss Hobbs.

MISS A. (*comes down between* PERC. *and* MISS F. C.) Percival, are you going quite mad?

PERC. (R. C.) I shall, Aunt, if I can't get away from this Miss Hobbs. She has entered like a canker-worm into my life's happiness. She has poisoned Beula's mind with a lot of idiotic new ideas, and now she comes here to live—here in this town. I will be rid of her and her set (*takes his hat from table and flings it on floor*)

BEULA. (L. C.) You turn my friends out of doors!

PERC. It's for your good. (*goes down to* R. *corner*)

BEULA. (L. C.) And you are to decide—

(MISS F. *is moving towards door*)

Millicent, please remain.

MISS F. (*up* L. C. *a little*) Oh no, please let me go. I am so sorry. (*to* MISS A.) I'd better go, hadn't I?

MISS A. (*up* C.) Yes, for goodness' sake go.

(*Exit* MISS F., *leaving door open*)

PERC. (*turns down* R.) To Miss Farey herself, I have not the slightest objection, and I'm only sorry—

(BEULA *has crossed and snatched up her gloves and bag from table near door*)

Beula, where are you going?

BEULA. (*as she goes* C. *drops letter*) To freedom. Millie, wait for me.

(*Exit* L. *cannoning against* GEORGE JESSOP, *who enters at the same moment, astonished and bewildered. He has been rushed past by* MISS FAREY *on the stairs—is a taciturn young gentleman of about* 25, *with sporting tastes.* PERC. *rushing after to stop* BEULA *also cannons against the unfortunate* JESSOP, *who, still more bewildered, to be quite out of the way, gets behind some furniture extreme* L. *corner of stage.* MISS A. *has crossed to* R. *up stage as* PERC. *crosses up* L.)

PERC. (*as he rushes across*) Come back, Beula! (*reaches the door as she slams it in his face. She locks it on the outside*) She's locked the door! (*rushes across, looks for and snatches up his hat, rams it on his head, and rushes to window as though intending to jump out*)

MISS A. (R. C. *by window stopping him*) Do you want a crowd round the house?

PERC. (*at window, looking out*) They are going on in a cab. What am I to do?

MISS A. Don't you think you've done enough?

PERC. But where are they going to? What—(*turns and sees* JESSOP *for the first time*) What the devil are you doing here?

JESSOP. (L. C.) Well, I came principally to see your wife.

PERC. (*comes down* R. C.) Then you've come to the wrong house, that's all. She and her friend, Miss Farey, have gone off together.

JESSOP. (*coming out of his corner*) I passed Miss Farey on the stairs, but she wouldn't stop. Where are they gone?

PERC. That's just what I want to know.

MISS A. (C., *picking up letter* BEULA *has let fall*) Perhaps this will throw some light on the matter.

PERC. (R. C., *takes letter*) "My dearest Beula"—This is from Miss Hobbs. (*turns it over*) "Ever yours affectionately, Henrietta Hobbs"—the cat!

MISS A. Never mind what she is! Read what she says.

PERC. (*reads*) "My dearest Beula. Just a hasty scrawl to tell you I have taken the old Mill House at Newhaven. So now, dear, we shall be near one another. I mean to make it into a sort of Summer Club for women."—(*with bitter contempt*) Summer Club! "How is it with you, dear? My heart bleeds for you!"—the crocodile—"The more I see and hear of marriage, the clearer my duty appears before me; to rescue women from worse than slavery." She's mad, quite mad. "If it becomes impossible, remember, dear, you always have a friend in me, and a refuge under my roof—"

MISS A. (C.) I thought it would be under the roof.

PERC. I'll prosecute this woman. She's lured my wife away from me. (*reads*) "Come and see me soon. Ever yours affectionately, Henrietta Hobbs. P. S. Millicent Farey has cancelled her engagement with the Jessop fellow—(*looks at* JESSOP) and has joined me. I am so glad for her sake, poor child. He was the typical man." (*lets fall the letter on table* R. C. *and looks at* JESSOP, *then at his aunt*)

JESSOP. (*standing* L. *leaning on his stick, the picture of dejection*) I only got her letter yesterday morning, and I came on here last night. I thought Mrs. Kingsearl might be able to help me.

PERC. (R. C.) The only thing that will help you will be Miss Hobbs's funeral. Somebody ought to poison that woman.

JESSOP. I supppose that's where they've gone.

PERC. Oh, yes. They've started the Summer Club all right.

MISS A. Well, it might be worse. You know where she is, and that no harm will happen to her.

PERC. No harm! No harm from companionship with that—(*knock at the door, pause, then, irritable, goes up* C. *a little*) What is that?

(MISS A. *crosses to* R. C.)

CHARLES. (*without*) Please, sir, a gentleman——

PERC. (C.) Tell him to go and hang himself.

CHARLES. Please, sir, he says you will be very glad to see him.

PERC. Then he's an ass. I don't want to see anybody. What's his name?

CHARLES. He says the name doesn't matter.

PERC. What is it? A tramp? Can't you get rid of him? What's he like?

CHARLES. (*after a pause*) A tall thin gentleman with a sandy—(*a sudden pause*) I mean an auburn beard. (*or mustache should the actor prefer it*)

PERC. Don't know him—don't want to. Tell him not at home.

CHARLES. (*after a pause*) He says he's in no hurry, and he'll wait till you are.

PERC. (*it suddenly occurs to him that the man is outside and has heard every word*) Where is he?

CHARLES. Here, sir, outside the door, sir.

PERC. (*shakes his fist at door and swears in silence, then in a whisper*) That boy's the biggest idiot. (*aloud*) Open the door.

CHARLES. Please, sir, it's locked.

PERC. I know that. Turn the key and open the door.

CHARLES. Please, sir, there isn't any key.

PERC. She has taken the key with her.

MISS A. That's a bit awkward.

PERC. What are we to do?

CHARLES. Please, sir, the gentleman says shall he put his foot against it.

PERC. Yes.

(*A vigorous kick follows, the door flies open and* WOLFF *enters. He is a man of about* 30, *bronzed with travel and bearded, a cool, imperturbable man of the world*)

WOLFF. (*coming down* C.) Good morning.

PERC. (R. *of* C. *shortly*) Good morning. Sorry to keep you waiting. Something has gone wrong with the lock. It often goes like that.

WOLFF. (C.) Must be very inconvenient.

PERC. It is, a little.

WOLFF. You don't know me.

PERC. To speak frankly, I don't

WOLFF. You were always a forgetful young beggar—Kingsearl Minor.

PERC. (*stares at him for a few moments*—WOLFF *remains standing with an amused smile on his face*) Wolff.

(WOLFF *tosses his hat aside and they shake hands vigorously, laughing the while*)

By Jove, I am glad! Aunt, this is Wolff Kingsearl—Kingsearl Major! You have heard me speak of him—the boy with my name. This is my aunt, Wolff—or rather my wife's aunt. By Jove! I am glad!

(MISS A. *has crossed to* R. *of* C., PERC. R. C.)

WOLFF. (C. *shaking hands with* MISS A.) To secure such an aunt was worth marrying.

MISS A. (R. *of* C., *pleased but amused*) Umph! Irish extraction, I presume, young man.

WOLFF. (C.) On my mother's side.

MISS A. (R. C.) I thought so. Very pleased to meet you. You have come at an opportune moment. (*to* PERC.) Now you'll like to talk to your friend, and I shall be glad of my breakfast. You'll find me down stairs when you want me. Good bye for the present, Mr. Wolff. I shall see you again.

(WOLFF *bows*)

Good bye, Mr. Jessop. (*takes her bag and crosses up*—PERC. *accompanying her—aside to him at door*) Don't take this thing too seriously. To-morrow she will be sorry. Don't do anything without consulting me. Now promise.

(WOLFF *crosses to* R. *of* C.)

PERC. I promise. You know how fond I am of her, Aunt.

(MISS A. *kisses him and exits*)

(*closes the door and returns to* C.) I am so glad, Wolff! Let me see, did I introduce you? I don't think I did. George Jessop—Mr. Wolff Kingsearl.

(*The two men bow*)

By Jove! you have altered, Wolff!

WOLFF. One does, between sixteen and—the nine and twenties.

(*The three men laugh*)

PERC. Sit down and tell us how you got here. (*Places chair which* MISS A. *used near* C. *and crosses back to* R. C.) The last I heard from you was—(*sits* R. C.)

(JESSOP *sits armchair* L.)

WOLFF. (*seating himself* C. *and taking out his cigar case*) Was from Teheran. May I?

PERC. Certainly.

WOLFF. The very morning after I wrote to you, I was ordered to Shanghai. Our Minister had fallen suddenly ill, and a ticklish bit of business had to be negotiated immediately—was lucky enough to please the chief, and as a reward received nine months' leave. Thought I'd like to see the old country after eight years' absence, so scuttled across and just caught the boat from Yokohama. Arrived at Victoria on the first and reached New York yesterday afternoon. (*lights cigar*) Thought I'd like to put in some yachting. You remember it was always my hobby. Obtained particulars of two boats that seemed likely, one lying at New Brunswick and the other at Newhaven, said I'd look at that first, got here at eleven o'clock last night, went over the yacht this morning, and wired acceptance. Then jumped into a cab and here I am. What time do you lunch, and how's your wife?

(JESSOP *and* PERC. *look at each other*)

Is she at home?

PERC. (R. C.) Well, I—she's—I am afraid you won't be able to see her to-day.

WOLFF. (C.) Oh, is she—(*a sudden idea occurs to him*) My dear fellow, can I congratulate you?

PERC. Congratulate me? What about?

WOLFF. (*sitting again*) How stupid of me. Of course you were only married in December. Travelling makes one forget dates. She's not ill, I hope.

PERC. Oh no, she's lively enough.

WOLFF. (*puzzled at the other's tone*) Delighted. I got the photograph you sent me. A charming girl; wants riding on the curb I should say.

PERC. Yes.

WOLFF. (*after a pause*) We're old school chums, you and I. What is it?

PERC. Oh, nothing, she's gone out.

WOLFF. I'm glad that's all. You alarmed me.

PERC. And she may not be back for a day or two. She's gone to stop with a friend—a—Miss Hobbs.

WOLFF. In the country?

PERC. No, no, close here.

WOLFF. Miss Hobbs is unwell I presume.

PERC. Wish she was. (*jumps up*) Wolff, what's to be done with a woman who makes it her business to go about ruining other people's lives, who estranges lovers and breaks up homes?

WOLFF. (*draws a grave face*) In my part of the world, we store that sort in sacks. Public opinion over here—

PERC. (*interrupting*) No, no! I don't mean that sort of bad. The woman who does mischief from a sense of duty—the wild woman. What can be done with her?

WOLFF. Tame her.

PERC. Yes—how?

WOLFF. (*shrugs his shoulders*) There's only one way to tame a woman. Make love to her.

PERC. Yes, but this is a woman you can't make love to.

WOLFF. I don't know that woman.

PERC. I mean she wouldn't let you. She wouldn't listen.

WOLFF. Never met her.

PERC. (*with a laugh*) Ah, you don't know our new women!

WOLFF. But I do the old, and I guess the receipt for either is very much the same—a little difference in the cooking, that's all.

JESSOP. I should like to see the man who would make love to Miss Hobbs.

WOLFF. Miss Hobbs has eyes, ears and a mouth?

JESSOP. I suppose so.

WOLFF. Then any man, not a fool, could do it—and win her within six months.

PERC. Would you like to try?

WOLFF. Thanks, I'm over here to rest.

PERC. Look here, Wolff, you're a sportsman. I'll bet you a dinner at Delmonico's that within six months you don't kiss Miss Hobbs.

WOLFF. Sorry to spoil your fun, but I have been unaccustomed to luxuries for years. The dinner would disagree with me most certainly—the lady probably. But who is this Miss Hobbs anyway?

PERC. (*exchanges a glance with* JESSOP) Who is Miss Hobbs?—well she—(*notices the letter lying on table, takes it up, rises and hands it to* WOLFF) Read that.

WOLFF. (C. *reads*) "My dearest Beula"—(*looks up*)

PERC. (R. C.) There's nothing private in it.

WOLFF. (*reads in silence, at the end looks up*) And things did become impossible?

PERC. It came to a head this morning. Beula and I have had one or two quarrels about the woman, last night we had another, and this morning——

WOLFF. (*interrupting*) This morning you finished last night's, the result scoring to Miss Hobbs.

PERC. That's what annoys me more than anything.

WOLFF. It would. For the present Miss Hobbs seems scoring all along the line. (*turning to* JESSOP) The "Jessop fellow" referred to in the P.S.?

JESSOP. (*nods*) I'm "the typical man."

PERC. You see the sort of woman she is. She worries one girl into breaking off her engagement with one of the best fellows that ever lived—

(JESSOP *makes to expostulate*)

Yes, you are, George. I don't say you are priggishly brilliant, but you are a good fellow. And not content with that, she sets to work to lure away my wife—

WOLFF. From one of the best husbands in the world

PERC. Well, anyhow—

WOLFF. (*rises*) Yes, you are. I don't say you are a tactful man, but you're a good fellow, Percival (*crosses to* R. C. *and lays his hand on* PERCIVAL'S *shoulder*) and she'll come to know it. (*turning away and glancing at the letter again*) She is a woman of character.

PERC. (R. C.) Who? Beula?

WOLFF. (C.) No, I was thinking of Miss Hobbs at that moment. What's she like?

PERC. Like? By Jove! Now I come to think of it, I've never seen her.

JESSOP. (L. C.) Some scraggy outsider.

WOLFF. Have you seen her?

JESSOP. Never!

PERC. I know her. Big nose, pasty complexion, thin hair, and a voice like a penny trumpet.

WOLFF. Are they all like that, these new women?

PERC. All! well, nothing is to be gained by going without one's meals. (*to* WOLFF) You have breakfasted?

WOLFF. At seven. A devilled kidney round at my hotel. (*looks at watch*) in half an hour would make the future clearer.

PERC. All right, we'll join you. I must change my clothes.

JESSOP. I want a talk. I'll come upstairs with you. (*crosses to* L. C. *to door*)

PERC. (R. C.) Do. (*to* WOLFF) Well, you won't take on that bet?

WOLFF. To kiss a scraggy outsider, with a big nose, thin hair, pasty complexion, and a voice like a penny trumpet!

PERC. Come along! (*crosses at back of* WOLFF *to* L. C.)

(*exeunt* PERC. *and* JESSOP)

WOLFF. (C. *alone—smokes his cigar, murmurs to himself*)

"She is a woman, therefore may be woo'd,
She is a woman, therefore may be won,
She is—"

(*enter* CHARLES)

CHARLES. (*up* L. C.) Oh! (*retiring*) I beg pardon.

WOLFF. Come in, Charles, come in.

CHARLES. (*comes down* L. C.) I thought Mr. Kingsearl was here, sir.

WOLFF. So he is. I am the old Mr. Kingsearl, your master is the young Mr. Kingsearl. What is it?

CHARLES. Well, there's a lady downstairs, sir.

WOLFF. Show her up.

CHARLES. Please, sir, I don't think master would like her shown up.

WOLFF. Who is she then?

CHARLES. Well, she don't say who she is. She merely says she's one of the maids from the Mill House, and she's come for the Missus' night things. But I think— (*looks round*)

WOLFF. (*has become interested*) Yes, Charles?

CHARLES. (C. *coming forward confidentially*) I think her name's Miss Hobbs.

WOLFF. The Miss Hobbs?

CHARLES. Yes, sir.

WOLFF. What makes you think so?

CHARLES. Well, her uppishness for one thing, sir. Her dictatoriafiedness.

WOLFF. Show her up, Charles, and don't say a word to anyone. I'll take all the responsibility.

CHARLES. Yes, sir. (*exit*)

(WOLFF *closes door behind him, looking round he espies a hand mirror on a side table, puts it on table* R. C. *in a prominent position, giving a glance in it to his own appearance as he crosses with it. Then he retires to window, where he stands looking out in such a position that the curtain hides him*)

(*enter* MISS HOBBS *shown in by* CHARLES, *who retires closing the door. She is a charming young woman most daintily dressed. She has the manner of an exceptionally important and busy Princess. She crosses and sits* L. *of table* R. C. *Glancing round the room and seeing no one she takes up the glass and arranges her hat.* WOLFF *comes from his corner and stands watching her. Turning the glass to get a better light she sees his face in it—highly indignant, she puts the glass back on the table, letting fall—unnoticed by herself—her handkerchief which was in her hand.* WOLFF *comes down and stands regarding her with composure. She sits very stiffly and does not look at him.*)

WOLFF. (C.) It isn't straight now.

MISS H. (*seated* L. *of table*) Thank you, I prefer it not straight.

WOLFF. (*throwing his cigar away into fireplace* L.) Shows an unbalanced mind.

MISS H. Sorry I can't please you.

WOLFF. I don't say you can't. You haven't tried yet.

MISS H. I certainly don't intend to.

WOLFF. Oh yes, you will.

MISS H. You think so?

WOLFF. I'm sure of it. We all follow our natural instincts, whether we admit it to ourselves or not. The natural instinct of woman is to please man.

MISS H. Evidently I am not a natural woman.

WOLFF. On the contrary, I should say you were one of the most ordinary type.

(MISS H. *makes a movement of impatience*)

To test you, I carefully placed that looking glass on the table.

MISS H. (*springing up*) Then it was a piece of gross impertinence, showing a mean-spirited mind. (*crosses to him* L. C.) You take an interest in me which is quite uncalled for.

WOLFF. (C., *has taken the opportunity to pick up her handkerchief unnoticed*) I can't help it—the mere slant of your hat.

MISS H. (*darts to table* R. C. *and snatching up glass, looks into it*) It's not on the slant, it's perfectly straight.

WOLFF. (*while her back is turned to him looks at name on handkerchief*) You said just now that you preferred it not straight.

MISS H. (R. C.) *stands a moment regarding him, hardly knowing whether to laugh at his cool impertinence or to be more angry still*) If you please, who are you?

WOLFF. (C.) Oh, a traveller.

MISS H. What in?

WOLFF. (*smiling*) Do I suggest that kind of traveller?

MISS H. No, you don't. In the mere way of business you would have acquired better manners. You suggest rather the gentleman who has called to tune the piano.

WOLFF. An honourable and useful calling. You see, we are beginning to take an interest in each other already.

(MISS H. *makes another movement of impatience*)

Now you, I should judge, to be a schoolmistress. You have just the manner.

MISS H. Nothing so intellectual.

WOLFF. A typewriter? I can imagine you rapping

out the word "love" (*imitating*) B—O—S—H!

MISS H. Nothing so useful.

WOLFF. You are too well dressed for a servant—a lady's maid?

MISS H. Possibly!

WOLFF. Umph! Well, there's nothing to be ashamed of in being a lady's maid, though I pity the lady. Which is your evening out?

MISS H. I keep it for my friends.

WOLFF. I want you to keep the next one for me. You know I like you—

MISS H. Indeed?

WOLFF. In spite of your faults.

(*enter* CHARLES *with letter on tray* L.)

MISS H. (*turning to him*) Have you got that parcel ready? (*as he stops to speak to her she sees letter and reads name*)

CHARLES. (*crosses down between* MISS H. *and* WOLFF) The maid is getting it ready for you, Miss—A letter for you, sir. (*crosses to* WOLFF, *who has crossed to* L. C.)

MISS H. (*aside*) Kingsearl! Beula's husband! The callous brute! I'll teach him a lesson.

WOLFF. (L. *has opened and read letter*) Oh, tell the man to come to me at the Hotel in half an hour. (*puts letter in his pocket*)

CHARLES. Yes, sir. (*exit*)

MISS H. Instructions about the piano?

WOLFF. (C. *puzzled at first, then recollecting*) Ah, yes, another appointment. We're so very busy, our firm just now. Well, about that evening out?

MISS H. (R. C.) I've been thinking about it. You see, I haven't known you very long.

WOLFF. All the more reason for haste now. Think of the time you've wasted.

MISS H. (*trying to adopt a servant's tone and manner*) Yes, but a girl must be very careful. I should not like to walk out with you till I've seen more of you.

WOLFF. You shall see as much of me as ever you want to.

(MISS H.'s *expression says "Possibly more"*)

The only question is how?

MISS H. Well, Missus will be out to-morrow after-

noon, and I was thinking that if you could come to our house—

WOLFF. Yes.

MISS H. To tune the piano—

(WOLFF'S *face falls*)

It would be so simple. I could be in the drawing room, and then if anything did happen—why—why, you could be tuning the piano. That would account for you.

WOLFF. (*doubtful*) Yes,—but——

MISS H. Isn't it a grand idea?

WOLFF. Yes, yes, the idea's all right. I was thinking of the piano. Is it a good piano?

MISS H. Oh yes! it's an excellent piano.

WOLFF. Um! You see those expensive pianos won't stand much tuning. (*cheers up*) But perhaps nothing will happen. Anyhow, I'll be there. What time?

MISS H. If you could come at half past three—I would open the door to you myself.

WOLFF. I'll be on the doorstep at 3:30 to the second.

(*enter* CHARLES L. *with large brown paper parcel*)

CHARLES. Here are the things, Miss.

MISS H. (*falling back into her natural tones*) Oh, thank you, take them downstairs for me, will you?

CHARLES. Certainly, Miss. (*exit* L.)

MISS H. (*going up* L. C.) You won't disappoint me?

WOLFF. (*crosses to* R. C., *as she goes up looks at her queerly*) No. You might tell me the house while you are about it.

MISS H. (*up* L. C.) Oh, I had forgotten. It's in the Prospect Avenue, the last house on the left, the house with the turret.

WOLFF. (R. C.) I'll find it. Half past three to-morrow. I don't know your name.

MISS H. I will tell it to you to-morrow. Good bye. (*exit*)

WOLFF. (*taking handkerchief from his pocket and reads name*) Good bye. "H. HOBBS" what a name, it's time she changed it. Now, is she merely flighty, or is she playing me some trick, I wonder. Well, anyway, she's charming.

(*enter* PERC. *and* JESSOP L., PERC. *crosses down* L. C., JESSOP *down* R. C.)

PERC. Afraid we've kept you waiting rather a long time.

WOLFF. (C.) Oh, I can generally amuse myself. I've been thinking about that bet.

PERC. What bet?

WOLFF. That I don't kiss Miss Henrietta Hobbs. May I order the dinner myself to suit my liver?

PERC. Are you serious?

WOLFF. Quite.

PERC. I think you'll be sorry.

WOLFF. Very possibly. But that's my affair. Is the bet still on?

PERC. Why, certainly, and I hope I lose.

JESSOP. (R. C.) You're a well plucked one, Mr. Kingsearl; I do admire you.

WOLFF. (C.) Thanks. (*writing in his betting book*) "Bet Percival Kingsearl dinner at Delmonico's for three that I kiss Miss Henrietta Hobbs within" —six months, too long for an assault, too short for a siege. We'll say a month. (*writes*) What's the date?

JESSOP. June 6th—Newmarket Spring Meeting.

WOLFF. (*writes*) June 6th, 1899. (*puts away book*) Ready?

PERC. (L. C.) I'm jolly hungry.

(*the three men take their hats and start*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Drawing room at the Mill House, furnished lightly and daintily. Three French windows at back open on to verandah—beyond garden and sea. A piano stands* R. *Table* L. C.—*behind easy chair* R. C. *stands a light screen hiding it from the windows. A settee stands* L. *of table—a large eight-day clock which chimes hours and half hours stands* L. *Doors* L. *and* R.

TIME.—AFTERNOON.

(MISS HOBBS, BEULA *and* MISS FAREY *discovered seated. MISS H.* L. *at table* L. *is writing. MISS F. on piano stool is reading—*BEULA R. C. *in armchair in front of screen with open book on her lap is looking towards*

the window. A few seconds pass before anyone speaks the only sound being the scratch of MISS H.'s *pen—then* BEULA *yawns audibly)*

MISS H. (*still writing*) What are you reading?

BEULA. Me! I don't know. (*looks at cover*) Oh, "*The Tragedy of a Soul.*"

MISS H. I haven't read that one yet. Is it good?

BEULA. Oh, I expect you'll like it. It's all about a woman who might have done something wonderful if she hadn't married a solicitor who crushed her.

MISS H. It's a common enough tragedy. A woman buries all that is best in her under the marriage altar.

MISS F. (*looking up*) But if every woman thought that?

MISS H. Every woman knows it—who thinks.

MISS F. Yes. But if they acted on it and nobody ever married, what would—you know what I mean, dear—wouldn't it be rather awkward?

MISS H. There will always be simpletons enough to people the world. Chimneys have to be swept, but we need not all be sweeps. It's the empty-headed women that make the best wives. The woman of brains has other work.

BEULA. (R. C.) One can find some precious silly old maids.

MISS H. Yes, the poor women who were born to be married—who are fit for nothing else, your man passes by. There's no "sport" in snaring them. It's the woman of mind—the woman who was meant for higher things that he loves to drag down and cage.

BEULA. (*rising and walking to window* C.) Oh, I'm so tired of the wickedness of man.

MISS H. The world is beginning to be tired of it—at last.

MISS F. Do you really think they are so very bad?

MISS H. My dear child, what do you see around you! What do you read? Every book you take up (*laying her hand on a novel that is beside her on the table*) Do you think these women imagine the men they draw? They have lived with them—suffered from them——

MISS F. But perhaps they can't help being bad——

MISS H. That's another question.

MISS F. Then oughtn't we to be sorry for them rather to try and help them?

MISS H. Many a woman has said that to her ruin. The tiger cannot help his nature, would you take him into your arms to try and improve him?

MISS F. (*with a laugh*) But if they are tigers, we must be tigresses.

MISS H. Men and women are differently constituted.

BEULA. (*turning from the window through which she has been gazing, comes down* C.) Oh, come, Hetty, that's all nonsense. We're not saints—I know I'm not. They've got something to put up with too.

MISS H. (L. C.) I don't say we're saints. Heaven knows we have our faults. But they are not men's faults.

BEULA. (C.) Well perhaps they are just as pleased with themselves that they haven't ours. I think men very nice, take 'em on the whole. It's jolly dull without 'em.

MISS H. You've small occasion to defend them.

BEULA. Oh, as much as anyone. Percy would be an awfully good fellow if I did not always rub him up the wrong way. You read these silly books and think all men are bad. I don't believe they are any worse than we are.

MISS H. I don't take my views only from books, I observe. And I don't say all men are bad. I can imagine the ideal man, strong, noble, tender and true. I can quite believe marriage with such a one would elevate, not degrade. But your husband, Beula, is not the ideal man.

BEULA. (*hotly*) You've no right to say that. You don't know him.

MISS H. (*rises quickly*) Don't I? I—(*checks herself*)

BEULA. No, you don't. You only know what I've told you when I've been in one of my silly tempers. He's the best husband in the world. His only fault is, he puts up with too much of my nonsense. I'm a little cat. Before I've lived here long you'll find out what a nasty, disagreeable little beast I am, and then you will know how good and patient he must have been. Don't you dare say a word against him.

(*exit* R. *crying*)

MISS H. (*has risen*) Poor child! She still cares for him. Ah well, she shall know him better before many hours are gone.

(MISS F. *has also risen and comes to* C.)

See that she is not left alone. I'm just going up

stairs to change. (*looking at her watch*) I daresay she is feeling sore. Women are so weak.

(*exit* L.)

Miss F. (*goes towards window*) I agree with Beula. I don't believe men are so bad. Anyhow they—(*seeing* Miss Abbey *crouching on the verandah, she gives a little cry.*)

(Miss A. *appears at the open window* C.)

Miss A. Hush! (*puts her head in and looks round*) Where is the dragon?

Miss F. (C.) Miss Hobbs?

Miss A. Whom else should I mean? Is she out?

Miss F. She's just gone upstairs to change her dress.

Miss A. How long does she take? The average time?

Miss F. Yes—about——

Miss A. That's all right. (*comes in—down* C.) Where's Beula?

Miss F. (R. C.) She's in her room. You've torn your dress.

Miss A. Climbing over the fence. The gate was locked and I didn't want to ring the bell. How is she?

Miss F. Oh, all right.

Miss A. (C.) Umph! I'd think better of her if she had a violent headache and was crying her eyes out. How are you? Got everything you want—now?

Miss F. (R. C.) Yes—oh,—yes.

Miss A. Perfectly sure—there's nothing you miss?

Miss F. No—why?

Miss A. Oh, nothing. Only there's something of yours walking up and down on the other side of that fence——

(Miss F. *gives a start, and a flush of pleasure comes into her face*)

and if you care to wave your handkerchief three times out of that window you can have it.

(Miss F. *gives a swift glance round the room, then runs to the window and waves—then runs back down* L. C. *and seems frightened*)

Miss F. Oh, I wish I hadn't done it. I shan't know what to say to him when——

(*enter* Jessop *through window*)

(*runs to meet him with both hands outstretched*) George!

JESSOP. (L. C.) Milly! (*goes to kiss her*)
MISS F. (L. *draws back*) Oh, you must not.
MISS A. Hoity toity—why not?
MISS F. We're not engaged now.
JESSOP. I am. I haven't broken it off.
MISS F. But I have.
MISS A. Well, then he can kiss you, but you mustn't kiss him, that's all. (*turns her back to them*)

(MISS F. *laughs*)

JESSOP. Good! Referee's decision. (*kisses her*)
MISS A. Be quick, because I've got another of them outside.
MISS F. (*laughing, crosses to* L. C. *a little*) I don't want ano—Oh, you mean Mr. Kingsearl.

(MISS A. *turns round*)

JESSOP. (L.) He's just outside the window. Shall I give him the tip?
MISS A. (R. *of* C., *to* MISS F.) Will she see him?
MISS F. (C., *thinks*) Yes. (*nods her head*) Yes, I feel sure she will.
MISS A. But what will she say to him? She is a bit uncertain.
MISS F. What is he going to say to her?
MISS A. That he is very sorry, and that it has been all his fault. I've been hammering that into him all the morning.
MISS F. (*with a laugh*) Then it will be all right.
JESSOP. (L. C.) Shall I bring him in?
MISS F. Yes.

(JESSOP *goes to window C. and beckons*)

MISS A. (R. C.) Well, I'm going, my dear——
MISS F. (*kisses her*) Thank you so much.

(*enter* PERCIVAL, *through window* C.)

PERC. (C.) Where is she?
MISS F. I'll fetch her, but she must not see you at first. (*to* JESSOP) You—(*thinking she hears something she runs to door* R. *and listens*) It's all right. (*returns*) You go in there. (*crosses* L., JESSOP *follow-*

ing and opening door L. *looks in, then returns leaving door open*) and wait for me (*leaving* JESSOP L. *she crosses to* PERC. C.) and you wait on the verandah out of sight till you're wanted. (*with a laugh*) I shall only be a minute. (*runs across on tiptoe, exit* R. *Throughout an atmosphere of conspiracy is maintained*)

MISS A. (C. *to* PERC.) Now, remember, it was all your fault. If she says it wasn't, contradict her. Everything has always been your fault.

PERC. (L. *of* C.) I know, Aunt. It's the truth. I've been a brute.

MISS A. (C.) That's right, you abuse yourself. Leave her to do the defending, and above all, not a word against Miss Hobbs.

PERC. I'll remember.

(MISS A. *is going up* C.)

JESSOP. (L. *calls after her in a whisper*) Miss Abbey——

(*she stops and turns*)

There's a hole in the fence the other side of the gate.

MISS A. Thank you, you're a good soul. That will save my shins a lot. (*to* PER.) Mind, Hobbs is made of stained glass.

(PERC. *nods*)

God bless you!

(*exit through window* C.)

JESSOP. (L.) Good old sort, your aunt.

PERC. (*up* C.) Isn't she?

JESSOP. What a trainer she'd make. Look out! (*darts through door* L.)

(PERC. *darts through window*)

JESSOP. (*nothing happening he puts his head out again*) False start. Percy!

PERC. (*re-appearing, crosses.*) Hulloa!

JESSOP. Haven't got a clove about you, have you—— (*the door* R. *moves—both men dart to their places,* JESSOP *softly closing the door after him. Enter* R. MISS F. *and* BEULA *talking*)

BEULA. (*comes to* L. C.) Let my mistake, dear, be a warning to you. Follow your own heart, that is the only true councillor.

MISS F. (*as she shuts the door comes to* C.) Yes, Hetty means well and all she says is very true, but she doesn't understand.

BEULA. (L. *of* C.) She has never loved.

MISS F. (C.) And that makes such a difference.

BEULA. It makes all the difference.

MISS F. (*pressing* BEULA'S *arm, affectionately*) What shall we do?

BEULA. For you, dear, the course is plain. Marry George. He may not be clever——

MISS F. (*bridling a little*) Oh, he's not stupid at all. People fancy he is, but he isn't.

BEULA. Perhaps not, dear. You know him best. Anyhow he's good. My instinct tells me that, and he loves you— (*ecstatically*) and love is life.

MISS F. And what will you do?

BEULA. Me! I shall take a situation as a governess, or else go for a nurse. Yes, I think I should prefer to be a nurse. I should wish to devote what remains of my life to alleviating the sufferings of others.

MISS F. Why not go back home and relieve Percival's sufferings. (*with a little laugh*)

BEULA. Impossible! (*crosses a little to* L. C.)

MISS F. (C.) Why?

BEULA. He would never forgive me.

MISS F. Do you know what my instinct tells me—that he would——

BEULA. Milly! Have you seen him——

MISS F. Hush! (*points to window*)

(PERC. *rushes in down* R. C., *throws his hat on armchair* R. C., BEULA *rushes into his arms and they embrace*)

BEULA. (*rushing to him*) Percy!

PERC. (*embracing her*) My own!

(MISS F. *has run across and is going out of door* L.)

BEULA. (L. *of* C.) Oh, don't let us drive you away, dear.

MISS F. (*half in and half out of door* L.) I shall be just as happy in here, dear, and then if I hear Miss Hobbs coming, I can——

(*an arm is thrust out and takes her round the waist and draws her in and the door is closed*)

BEULA. (L. *of* C. *enquiringly of* PERC.) George Jessop?

(PERC. *nods*)

The little puss! (*laughs—throwing her arms round him again*) Oh, Percy, can you forgive me?

(*they sit on settee* L. C., PERC. *on* R. *end*, BEULA *on* L. *end*)

PERC. It is you must forgive me, darling. It was all my fault.

BEULA. No dear, all mine. I've been your bad little wife——

PERC. (*putting his arm round her*) No, dear, my best little wife—I—I mean the best little wife in the world—and in future it shall have its own way in everything.

BEULA. It doesn't want it. It only wants to please the handsomest, nicest, tiresomest hubby in the world. (*nestling against him*)

PERC. My dove! (*embraces her again, but immediately hearing a slight noise they spring apart, and sitting at opposite ends of the settee in demure attitudes, listen*)

BEULA. What was that?

PERC. (*rises and creeps to window* C.) Oh, it's only the cat. (*returns*)

BEULA. I was afraid it was Hetty. (*suddenly*) Percy, what are we to do with Miss Hobbs? I dare not tell her I want to go back.

PERC. (*resting himself beside her and drawing her to him*) You do want to come back?

BEULA. If you will have me.

PERC. I couldn't live without you——

BEULA. You do miss me then?

PERC. I have thought of you every moment.

BEULA. So have I of you, dear. Did you eat any dinner?

PERC. Not a morsel.

BEULA. No more did I. We will never be horrid to each other any more, will we?

PERC. Never! (*kisses her on the forehead*) Angel!

BEULA. We will be all in all to one another. Nothing shall ever come between us again. We——

(*enter* MISS F. *and* JESSOP *in full flight*)

MISS F. (*crosses to window*) Miss Hobbs!

(JESSOP *up to window* C., BEULA *and* PERC. *spring up*)

BEULA. (L. C.) Oh, Percy, must you go?
PERC. (R. *of her*) Yes, but we've settled nothing.
MISS F. (*up* C.) Be quick!
BEULA. (*going up to him*) To-morrow—same time. (*she bustles him off* C.)
JESSOP. (*to* PERC.) Stretch yourself!

(*the two men fly through window and disappear*—PERC. *has left his hat on chair* R. C.—BEULA *exits door* R. *as* MISS HOBBS *enters* L. *She is dressed for her part in a dainty French cap and apron—she is just in time to see* BEULA'S *flying skirts.* MISS F. *is up* C.)

MISS H. (*crossing to* R. C.) Whatever is the matter with Beula to-day. She does nothing but—(*sees hat on armchair—awful pause—then she takes it up*) What's this? (*crosses to* C.)
MISS F. (*comes down* R. C. *frightened—she gives a nervous little laugh*) It—it's a hat.
MISS H. (L. *of* C.) Whose?
MISS F. I—I don't know.
MISS H. Millicent, you do know. It's his hat—her husband's He has been here, the wretch!
MISS F. (*relieved that it isn't* JESSOP'S *hat plucks up courage*) Well, I really can't see that that was wrong of him. I respect him for wanting to get her back.
MISS H. The hypocrite!
MISS F. Ah, you're too hard on him. He may have behaved badly, but he's very sorry.
MISS H. (L. *of* C. *contemptously*) Sorry? (*bangs the hat down on table* L. C.) Millicent, we must save her from him. He isn't fit to be the husband of a Hottentot.
MISS F. How do you know?
MISS H. I have seen him—I have spoken to him.
MISS F. When?
MISS H. Yesterday—not half an hour after he had driven her away from him, and he at once began to make love to me.
MISS F. To you, dear, impossible!
MISS H. (*irritably*) It's no use saying "impossible" because he did it. I went to the house to get some of Beula's things, and was shown up into the drawing room. He was there. He didn't know who I was. He didn't take the trouble to inquire. It was sufficient

for him that I was something in petticoats and that I had what he would call, I suppose, a pretty face.

Miss F. What did he do?

Miss H. Well, I told you, he made love to me—in his peculiar way. He mistook me for a servant—a lady's maid—and I left him to think so. And then he asked me which was my evening out.

Miss F. Did you tell him—I mean are you going to see him again?

Miss H. Yes—I at once made up my mind that it was my duty to let Beula know the sort of man he really is. He is coming here this afternoon—now, in a few minutes. (*looking towards clock*) Unless——

Miss F. Unless what?

Miss H. (*thinking*) Unless, finding that it is the very house that shelters his wife, he has not the impertinence—Ah, but there is no fear of that. Whatever might restrain him it would not be lack of impertinence. He will come.

Miss F. And what are you going to do?

Miss H. Prove to Beula his true character, save her from her own weakness. As that clock strikes four—exactly—I want you to bring Beula into this room by the verandah. She shall find him at my feet.

Miss F. Do you think, dear, she will quite like that?

Miss H. Does the hurt child like the surgeon's knife?

Miss F. And I'm sure she won't like you for it.

Miss H. One serves one's friends for their good—not their thanks.

Miss F. I don't like the idea, Hetty. Candidly, I don't.

Miss H. Do you think I do? Think, Milly! Five minutes ago he was here on his knees to his wife, asking her to come back to him. If he is worthy of the least consideration—if it could mean anything but life-long misery to her to remain under his roof—could he ten minutes afterwards return to the very same house to make love—flirt—carry on—whatever you prefer to call it—with another woman?

Miss F. No—that's true.

Miss H. If he doesn't come, well and good. If he does!—then, if she still cares to be one of his playthings, let her. But she shall know what she is choosing.

Miss F. I can't understand it. He always seemed to me to be rather a nice man—on the whole.

Miss H. So he did to me. There's the hypocrisy of the man. If I hadn't known who he was—I should have liked him. He had a way with him——

Miss F. You are sure it was he——

Miss H. My dear child, there he was in his own drawing-room, smoking a cigar. Besides, a letter came for him while I was there. I read the name on the (*the clock chimes the half hour*) There's half past three, go now, dear. You will help me?

Miss. F. (*reluctantly, as they cross* R.) Yes, if he really is that sort of man I suppose she is better without him. Anyhow, I will bring her in here at four o'clock.

Miss H. As the clock strikes, I shall be in that chair. (*points to chair* R. C., *behind which the screen stands*) It's for her good.

Miss F. I don't believe he will come.

Miss H. Let us hope he doesn't.

(*exit* Miss F., R.; Miss Hobbs *returns* C., *looks at clock —then at her watch—then seeing the hat, crosses and takes it up, looks for a hiding place, stoops and hides it under the settee, which has a fringe reaching to the ground. Then rising, she looks at the clock again —then goes to window* C., *and looks out—seeing* Wolff *in garden she beckons and returns to* C.,*arranging her cuffs and apron*)

(*enter* Wolff *by window* C., *he carries a stick, wears gloves, but is without a hat*)

Miss H. Umph! You have come.

Wolff. (R. C., *lays his stick on piano, down* R.) And if I hadn't had to climb over a fence and scramble through a laurel hedge, I'd have been here more punctually. You might see to the gate being open next time.

Miss H. (C.) It shall be wide open the next time you come.

Wolff. (*is flicking some dust off his clothes with his handkerchief*) Thanks.

Miss H. (C.) You don't wear a hat?

Wolff. Never—after I have once put my foot through it.

Miss H. It must be very tiresome, losing one's hat.

Wolff. It is irritating. Particularly when you reflect upon the walk home. Missus out? (*has commenced to take off his gloves*)

Miss H. Yes—but we must be careful of accidents.

The young ladies are about. Have you brought your fork?

WOLFF. (R. C., *puzzled*) My fork! I have lunched. (*remembering*) Oh, my tuning fork—never use one—do it all by ear. (*strikes a note*) Fine pitch.

MISS H. There's one note in particular wants seeing to, B. sharp.

WOLFF. Well, let me take my gloves off.

MISS H. I was referring to the note. (*crosses in front to* R. C. *of him and strikes the note*) Can't you hear, it's all wrong.

WOLFF. (R. C.) What's the matter with it?

MISS H. (*returning to* L. C.) If you take the piano to pieces you'll find out.

WOLFF. (C.) I'm not so sure about that. You can take a piano to pieces, and then wish you hadn't. Don't you fuss so much about this piano. I haven't come to play the piano.

MISS H. Yes, but I was thinking of accidents.

WOLFF. So am I. There will be less chance of one if I leave the thing alone. I shall only make a noise.

MISS H. But suppose one of the young ladies comes in?

WOLFF. Don't you worry. I'll explain things to the young ladies.

MISS H. (L. *of* C.) I think you'd find it difficult. Beula—(*she lays stress on the name*) especially is very inquisitive. You don't happen to know the young lady I mean, do you? (*she watches him narrowly*)

WOLFF. (C., *quite undisturbed*) Haven't the faintest acquaintanceship with her.

MISS H. Mrs. Beula Kingsearl. (*with still more stress*) I thought you might have been there to tune the piano.

WOLFF. Never met her in my life. (*looks her straight in the face*)

MISS H. (*turning away with indignation; aside*) Ah—the man must have practised for years.

WOLFF. (*crosses over to* R. C., *lays his gloves beside stick on piano*) I know her husband. Percival Kingsearl.

MISS H. (C.) Oh, you do know somebody. Tell me, what he's like.

WOLFF. Oh, a very nice fellow indeed.

MISS H. I have been told he is a most objectionable man.

WOLFF. (*crosses back to* C.) Must have been an idiot

who told you. One of the best fellows in the world—a bit of an ass.

MISS H. Oh, you think him an ass.

WOLFF. In some things. He'll grow wiser as he gets older.

MISS H. You are candid.

WOLFF. One generally is—about one's friends. And now may I ask you a question?

MISS H. Certainly.

WOLFF. Is this a private lunatic asylum?

(MISS H. *is speechless for a moment with indignation*)

Don't answer if you don't like.

MISS H. (L. C.) Who told you so? Your friend, Mr. Kingsearl?

WOLFF. Never mind who told me, is it?

MISS H. (*sits in chair*, R. *of table* L. C.) No, it is not.

WOLFF. Dear me, what stories people do put about.

MISS H. Don't they. Perhaps they told you I was a lunatic.

WOLFF. You! No, the servant wouldn't be mad. But I was told your mistress, Miss Hobbs——

MISS H. (*interrupting*) Oh! So you've learnt who my mistress is. And what do they say about her, pray?

WOLFF. That—but it's nothing to do with you or me. (*crosses back to table* L. C. *and leans over back of settee*) Let's talk about ourselves.

MISS H. (*seated*) Oh, I should like to hear it. Was it very abusive?

WOLFF. (*over back of settee* L. C.) No, it's rather pathetic. I was told that once—she was a beautiful girl——

MISS H. Oh, did they say how long ago?

WOLFF. No, they didn't mention the date. But at twenty—or thereabouts (*he is looking critically at her*) she fell desperately in love.

MISS H. (*inwardly fuming*) Oh, did she?

WOLFF. It was an unfortunate affair.

MISS H. So it seems.

WOLFF. The young man would have nothing to do with her.

MISS H. How very unfortunate. What happened?

WOLFF. (*shrugs his shoulders*) It completely turned the poor woman's brain. Sad story, isn't it?

MISS H. (*rises, crosses to* R. C., *then back to* C. *again*) Only like most interesting stories, it happens not to be true. Will you kindly tell your friend—(*with gathering*

indignation she approaches him) Mr. Percival Kingsearl——

WOLFF. Don't be indignant with me. I'm not Mr. Percival Kingsearl.

MISS H. When next you meet him, tell him that Miss Hobbs has all her wits about her, and intends to use them. You won't forget?

WOLFF. "Miss Hobbs has all her wits about her." I'll endeavour to remember it. (*is* L., *leaning over back of settee and regards her*) You know I respect you for standing up for Miss Hobbs. (*coming back of table to* C.) You're a good girl.

MISS H. (*standing* R. C., *freezingly*) Thank you.

WOLFF. (C.) And now don't you think it time we talked about ourselves?

MISS H. (R. C.) Oh, as you—(*looks at clock—under her breath*) Good gracious! five minutes to four. (*aloud*) No, I think it is time we left off talking and—(*hesitates*)

WOLFF. And what?

MISS H. (*with calm seriousness*) Will you answer me the truth?

WOLFF. It's not a commodity too often exchanged between a man and woman. But if it be possible you shall have it.

MISS H. What have you come here for?

WOLFF. What for?

MISS H. Have you come here to make love to me, or have you not?

(WOLFF *staggers back* L. C. *against table in astonishment, the table saves him from falling*)

— the truth!

WOLFF. Well, if you put it that way——

MISS H. I do put it that way.

WOLFF. I confess I thought it not impossible we might drift in that direction.

MISS H. Thank you, that is all I wanted to know. Then, if you are ready, we will commence. (*sits in easy chair* R. C.)

WOLFF. (*still struggling with his astonishment*) You don't think it too early to begin?

MISS H. I think it will soon be too late. Please be quick. (*her manner is that of a martyr to duty*)

WOLFF. (*aside*) Percival is right. I don't know the new woman. (*aloud*) What shall I do?

MISS H. Don't you know?

WOLFF. I thought I did, but my ideas appear to be old-fashioned.

MISS H. Well, I think,—I've generally heard—that gentlemen go down on their knees——

WOLFF. (*approaches*) Oh, all right. It isn't my method, but you seem to have your own programme. (*kneels* R. *of her.*) Like this?

MISS H. (*seated in armchair in front of screen*) You might be a little nearer.

(*He draws nearer*)

You are sure you want to make love to me? I'm not persuading you against your better feelings?

WOLFF. Not in the least. I'm quite willing. I'd have preferred doing it in my own way, but I daresay you know best. What do I do next?

MISS H. (*sarcastically*) Umph! You don't seem to have had much experience.

WOLFF. I haven't—of this sort.

MISS H. I thought not. (*looks at clock*) You take my hand. (*flings it out to him*)

WOLFF. Oh! (*takes it*) But, I say, you know, if we go on at this rate there will be nothing whatever left for next week.

MISS H. We may not be here next week.

WOLFF. If we are, we shall be stone-broke. What do I do with it?

MISS H. Oh, haven't you any ideas of your own? You look at it I suppose. (*she again looks away from him towards clock and then towards verandah* L.)

WOLFF. (*noticing her worry*) What's the matter?

MISS H. Oh, nothing. (*is excited and anxious*)

WOLFF. Afraid of somebody coming?

MISS H. No—not in the least afraid.

WOLFF. I thought you seemed anxious. It's a pretty hand.

(*Clock begins to tremble on the strike*)

MISS H. The other one is just as pretty. (*gives him her* L. *hand and looks out* L.)

(*The screen is of a height that she, sitting, can see over it; or it is so arranged that she can see round it while from* WOLFF *it hides everything.*)

(*sees or hears the flutter of the girls' dresses*) You can kiss them if you like.

(*Enter* MISS F. *and* BEULA *from verandah* L. *to* C. *They come forward*—MISS F. R., *and* BEULA L., *but so that* WOLFF *does not see them till the proper time. He is on the point of kissing* MISS H.'s *hands when, hearing the noise of* MISS F.'s *entry, he releases them and is about to rise.*)

Oh, pray do not rise.

(BEULA *now advances* L. C. *and* WOLFF *sees her*—MISS H. *jumps up.*)

(C.) **Ah, Beula dear, you are just in time. Let me introduce you to—your husband.**

(WOLFF, *who throughout has remained entirely undisturbed, rises with perfect sangfroid.*)

BEULA. (L.) This gentleman is not my husband.

MISS H. (*stares at her in silence for a moment, crosses to her* L. C.) I can understand your disowning him, my dear.

BEULA. He never was my husband.

MISS H. (*growing alarmed, she appeals for confirmation to* MISS F.) Milly, who is this gentleman?

MISS F. (R. *below piano*) I have never seen him before in my life, dear.

MISS H. (*still unconvinced, is close to settee; diving down, she brings out the hat, holds it out to* WOLFF) Will you oblige me by putting on that hat.

WOLFF. (C., *takes it, puts it on—it is too small for him—hands it back to her*) I really cannot——

MISS H. (L. *of* C.) There is some hideous mistake here.

BEULA (*dryly*) So it would seem.

MISS H. Who are you? Can't you speak?

WOLFF. I have never been asked the question yet. I am Mr. Kingsearl.

(*The three women look at each other*)

Mr. Wolff Kingsearl.

BEULA. (L.) Oh, I know you. I've often heard Percival speak of you.

WOLFF. Your husband and I were at school together. We happened to possess the same surname. I hope we shall come to know each other better.

BEULA. I hope so, I'm sure.

Miss H. Then I've invited the wrong man here! To make love to me!

Wolff. I am extremely sorry. A long absence abroad must excuse my ignorance. I was unaware that Western ladies cared to receive attention only from their friends' husbands. I apologise for having offered you the homage of a mere bachelor.

(*Bows to* Miss H., *and taking his gloves and stick goes out with perfect composure the way he came*)

(*exit*)

(*No one speaks till he is out of sight*)

Miss H. (c., *almost in tears*) I did it all for your sake, dear. I wanted to show you what sort of a man your husband was.

Beula. (*dryly*) It was very kind of you. In future I will form my own opinion of him.

(*Exit* l.)

Miss H. (c.) You don't doubt me, Milly?

Miss F. (*crosses to her*, c.) No, dear. (*kisses her*) But I'm sure you must be glad yourself you were mistaken. It will be so much better for her.

Miss H. (c.) Yes, but what about me? What will he think of me?

Miss F. (r. *of* c.) Who? Percival?

Miss H. No, the other one. How he must despise me.

Miss F. (*meaning to comfort her*) What, Mr. Wolff! Oh, well, that won't matter, dear. You're not likely ever to see him again.

Miss H. (*still with tears in her voice*) No, I suppose not He was very nice in his way—so different from most men. I'd have liked him not to think so badly of me.

(*Enter maid-servant*, l.)

Serv. (*down* l. c.—*she has* Wolff's *betting book in her hand, which she gives to* Miss H.) Oh, if you please, ma'am, the gardener found this under the laurel hedge near the gate. He thinks some gentleman must have dropped it.

Miss H. (*taking it*) Oh. thank you, Jane.

(*Exit servant* R.)

MISS H. (*opens and examines it*) Why, it's a betting book surely. (*turning over leaves*) Yes—and it is his. (*reads*) "Wolff Kingsearl. Newhaven Yacht Club." I suppose he must have—(*in idle curiosity is still turning over the leaves—finds the entry of bet—with a sudden change of tone*) What's this?

(MISS F. *looks over her shoulder*)

(*reads*) "June 6th. Bet Percival Kingsearl dinner at Delmonico's for three that I kiss Miss Henrietta Hobbs within one month." So that's the explanation, is it? (*shuts the book with a snap, and seizes* MISS F.'s *arm*) Milly, will you come with me?

MISS F. Yes, dear, but where?

MISS H. To take him back his betting book.

[(*She takes* MISS F. *by the arm and together they exeunt off* R.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Cabin of the yacht "Good Chance," which is lying at its moorings in the mouth of the river. It is a plain, business-like yacht, meant for work, not show, but it is comfortable, clean and bright. A section is shown, the portholes at back, the companion-way* R. *The roof is an arched skylight. A table runs down the* C. *with hanging lamps. Below the portholes runs the usual cushioned seat, and above it are cupboards containing groceries—coffee, sugar, milk, cups and saucers, plates, some chops, etc. Round the table are screw chairs. A stove provided with all necessary cooking utensils stands* L. *In cupboard behind it are other cooking utensils, coal, wood, etc. Up stage* R., *above companion ladder, a door leads to fo'c'sle.*

[(CAPTAIN SANDS *discovered* R.—*an elderly, bearded man,* C. JESSOP L., *in yachting clothes. Both are smoking.*)

TIME—*Afternoon.*

SANDS. Skipper's a bit late. (*stands at foot of companion way*)

JESSOP. (*seated* L. *end of table, looks at his watch*) Yes. He said five o'clock.

SANDS. Not that it matters much. There'll be no sailing this afternoon.

JESSOP. No, there doesn't seem much wind, does there?

SANDS. And it wouldn't be any good if there was. It's the fog that'll stop our little game to-day.

JESSOP (*rises, goes up back* L. C., *glances through porthole*) It don't look very bad.

SANDS. (*goes up* R. C., *looks out of porthole*) It's making right enough. I've been watching it. In an hour —or less—we'll all be tucked in it as cosy as an infant in its cot.

(*Enter* WOLFF *down companionway—he is dressed in yachting costume*—SANDS *salutes him—crosses to* C.)

JESSOP. (*coming down* L. C.) Hulloa, you are late!

WOLFF. (C.) Yes, I am a little.

JESSOP. Sands says we shan't be able to sail to-day.

WOLFF. (*to* SANDS) Oh, not safe?

SANDS. (*at foot of ladder*) No, sir, not to-day.

WOLFF. Oh! (*goes to cupboard at back* R., *takes out writing case, brings it to table* R., *where he sits on chair at* R. *end and writes*) On Tuesday, the wind was off land, which rendered it, in your judgment, impossible to put to sea.

SANDS. I always like to be on the safe side, sir.

WOLFF. I am convinced of it, Sands. Yesterday, the wind was from the sea, which, according to you, made any attempt at sailing still more hazardous.

SANDS. You see, sir, this is a very peculiar coast——

WOLFF. (*cutting him short*) So it would appear. To-day we will try the experiment of moving. I am running this thing as a yacht, you know, not a house-boat.

SANDS. You're skipper, sir. If you like to put out in a fog you won't be able to see your own mainsail through, all right. My youngsters are all earning their own living, thank God! and maybe your executors will feel it their duty to do something for the old woman.

WOLFF. Umph! Well, we will wait awhile and see if the fog does come.

SANDS. You won't have to wait long, sir.

(*Exit up companionway*)

WOLFF. They are all alike, those men. Their idea of yachting is to sit in a bar and talk about the weather. I'm afraid he's right about the fog, though. Confounded nuisance.

JESSOP. (*seated* L. *of table—filling his pipe*) Oh, well, can't be helped. Had such a lark this afternoon, Percival and I.

WOLFF. Oh!

JESSOP. Went there with the old girl—his aunt, you know. She's a flyer, she is. Led all the way, took the fence like a three-year-old.

WOLFF. What are you talking about? Went where?

JESSOP. Why, to the Mill House—saw the girls.

WOLFF. Oh, you have been there.

JESSOP. Rather! Had a rare bit of fun. Nearly got copped, though. Only just cleared the verandah in time.

WOLFF. Did Percival leave his hat behind him? (*has finished and directed his letter*)

JESSOP. Yes. How did you know? Have you been there?

WOLFF. (*rising*) Yes.

JESSOP. Good man! Did you see her?

WOLFF. (*comes down in front of table*) Miss Hobbs? Yes.

JESSOP. What's she like?

WOLFF. What made you think she was old and a frump?

JESSOP. Well, isn't she?

WOLFF. No—worse luck!

JESSOP. Why "worse luck"? I should have said good business. Did you win your bet?

WOLFF. Damn the bet! (*pause*) What is she? Who is she? What do you know of her?

JESSOP. (*raises his eyebrows*) Something. Had it from Milly this afternoon. Seems her father was a General Hobbs. He got scalped by Indians. That so upset her mother that she died a few weeks after she was born—you know what I mean—leaving the kid to be brought up by an aunt who had buried two husbands, both of 'em wrong uns, and who took it out by going about, giving lectures on the social problem, and all that sort of thing—seems to have been a regular heavyweight. Jolly hard lines on the girl, I call it.

WOLFF. Umph! That should account for a great deal.

What does Miss Farey say of her? They seem to think a lot of her, those girls. It's a good sign, you know, when a woman is a favourite with her own sex.

JESSOP. Oh, Milly's awfully gone on her. Wish she wasn't. Says she's an awfully good sort when you know her. Will do anything for a woman, but thinks we are rats.

WOLFF. (*taking out and lighting cigar*) You know, the thing your women over here suffer from is having nothing to do all day but sit about and think, and that's just the way to think wrong. They know nothing of the world. Work, the whole explanation of life, is a sealed book to them. (*is walking up and down*) What they want is to be taken out of this doll's house you call civilization and made to face facts. If I had that girl up in the Himalayas for six months, I'd make a woman of her, and a rattling good woman. (*glancing through port-hole*) They don't row badly, those two girls.

(JESSOP *jumps up and goes to a porthole* L.)

Are they making for us?

JESSOP. It looks like it. I do believe—yes, I'll swear that's Milly's back. Who is the other one, I wonder?

WOLFF. It's uncommonly like—yes, by Jove! she just turned her head. It is Miss Hobbs. (*turns away from porthole*)

JESSOP. What does it mean, I wonder? It's the yacht they are making for right enough. (*turns away*)

WOLFF. (*down* R. C.—*has been pondering*) If she does I will.

JESSOP. Will what? (*comes down* L. C.)

WOLFF. Knock some sense into her. Could you get Miss Farey away—keep her quiet in the fo'c'sle for half and hour? It's a neat, tidy little fo'c'sle—a bit cramped, that's all.

JESSOP. What's the game?

WOLFF. I want the girl to believe that she and I are alone on this yacht, drifting out to sea. Providence means to help me, evidently. The fog *is* coming. She won't be able to tell whether we are moving or whether we are not—whether we are one mile from the land or ten. If you and your charming friend will back up Providence, I'll teach Miss Henrietta Hobbs more sense in half an hour than she has learnt all her life.

JESSOP. Well, I'll try.

WOLFF. You explain to her that it's for her friend's good, and you take it from me that that's the truth. (*calls up ladder*) Captain Sands!

SANDS. (*from above*) Aye, aye, sir!

WOLFF. She's played a trick on me, I'll play a trick on her, and she'll be glad of mine later on.

(*Enter* SANDS *down ladder*)

Sands, does your constitutional prudence warn you against the dangers of deception?

(SANDS *is puzzled*)

Are you afraid to tell a lie?

SANDS. (*with proud candour*) No, sir!

WOLFF. (R. C.) That's all right. There are two ladies making for this yacht.

SANDS. Them two in the boat, sir?

WOLFF. Yes. I don't want them to know that I'm on board. If they ask for me, you're expecting me.

SANDS. (R.) I understand, sir.

WOLFF. Don't let them go away. Tell them Mr. Jessop is on board and ask them down into the cabin.

SANDS. I'll fix it, sir. (*going*)

WOLFF. Wait a moment. That's not all. The moment their backs are turned, I want you to take their boat—quietly——

(SANDS *nods*)

and fasten it up in the bows—out of sight.

SANDS. Aye, aye!

WOLFF. Then get into your own boat and make off; wait on the quay for signals. Is this fog of yours a sure thing?

SANDS. It's a-walking to us with its arms spread out.

WOLFF. Good! That's all.

(SANDS *salutes and exits*)

JESSOP. (L. C.) She'll be jolly wild, if she learns the trick.

WOLFF. If you and Miss Farey don't tell her, she never will. When I give you the word, slip into the boat and come round. She will think you have been rowing about and missed your bearings in the fog.

MISS F. (*heard calling*) "Good Chance," ahoy!

(SANDS *replies*)

WOLFF. (*whispering*) Here they are!

JESSOP. (*also whispering*) If they've come to see you and find you're not on board, they'll want to go back.

WOLFF. Don't let 'em. Tell them you're expecting me every minute. (*creeps out by door* R.)

SANDS. (*above*) Mr. Jessop, sir! Couple of ladies, sir—want the skipper.

JESSOP. (*pretending surprise*) A couple of ladies! (*goes to foot of ladder* R.) By Jove! you, Milly!

(*Enter* MISS F. *down ladder, followed by* MISS H.)

MISS F. (*on the steps*) Mr. Kingsearl is not here. We wanted to see him.

JESSOP. He won't be more than a few minutes. Come down.

(*They complete their descent*)

MISS F. (C.) My friend, Miss Hobbs, Mr. Jessop.

JESSOP. (L. C.) Delighted!

(MISS H. *bows distantly*)

I'll go and have a look round—see if I can see him. Please sit down. (*goes up back of table to* R. *and up ladder*)

MISS F. (L. C.) Jolly little cabin, isn't it? Here's a stove.

MISS H. (R. C.) I'm beginning to wish we hadn't come now.

MISS F. Why, dear?

MISS H. I don't know. Do you think it looks forward at all, our coming?

MISS F. No, dear. You see, you've got the excuse of having come to return his book.

MISS H. Yes, but I don't want him to think it's an excuse.

MISS F. (*with a laugh*) It's not like you, dear, to trouble yourself about what a man thinks of you.

(JESSOP *comes half way down and beckons to* MISS F.)

MISS H. (*has her back to ladder, does not see* JESSOP) I never have before. I don't think I can be quite well today. I don't know what's the matter with me.

MISS F. (*sees* JESSOP, *comes up to* MISS H.) Well, let us go, dear. There's plenty of time.

MISS H. I know what I'll do. I'll write him a letter (*goes to* R. *end of table, draws off her gloves and lays them by her*)

(MISS F. *takes the opportunity to go to* JESSOP, R., *they whisper together, unnoticed by* MISS H.)

simply and briefly explaining the facts and enclosing his book—and leave it here for him. That's what I'll do. (*attempts to draw screw chair towards her, is surprised for the moment that she cannot. She sits and takes paper from pad or portfolio that* WOLFF *has left on table*)

MISS F. (L. *of her—comes to her*) You won't want me while you're writing, will you, dear?

MISS H. (*turns in her chair and sees* JESSOP *on stairs*) No, dear, go to your fate. (*sighs*)

MISS F. We are just going for a little row. (*runs back to* JESSOP)

MISS H. (*calls after them*) Don't go far. I shall only be a few minutes.

(*Exeunt* MISS F. *and* JESSOP)

MISS H. (*writing*) "Dear sir, I should be very sorry for you to think"—(*looks up*) That won't do! I don't care what he thinks. (*crumples up the paper and throws it away, begins again*) "Dear sir"—No, that's not distant enough!—we have never been introduced even yet. "Sir"——

(*Enter* WOLFF *door* R., *he comes forward and stands behind her*)

(*writing not seeing him*) "Sir—you may think my conduct this afternoon requires explanation——"

WOLFF. Don't you?

MISS H. (*pauses, looks round, then rises, crosses to* L. C.) I understood you were not on board.

WOLFF. (*comes down* R. C.) Is that why you came?

MISS H. (*looks at him straight and speaks seriously*) No, I wanted to see you. I have behaved very badly to you.

WOLFF. Mistaking me for your friend's husband. I must have seemed to you a cad. It was an error easily made by a lady apt, I should say, to arrive at conclusions first and to reason afterwards. The person to be most angry with you is not I.

MISS H. Beula?

WOLFF. Should, on the contrary, be grateful to you—for proving to her that you are no safe guide.

MISS H. (*moving away sarcastically*) It is kind of

you to seek to console me. If you mean Beula's husband——

WOLFF. (*interrupts*) He should also be busy blessing you. What are your feelings towards yourself? (*pause*) Was it womanly?

MISS H. (*haughtily*) It is not my ambition to be thought what you would call "womanly"!

WOLFF. Great Scott! you don't think it manly?

MISS H. I believed my friend married to a scamp. I thought it my duty to let her know.

WOLFF. "Your duty!" Were you ever a child? Had you ever a doll you loved?

MISS H. I fail to see the connection.

WOLFF. Had you?

MISS H. I daresay I had the customary weakness of my age and sex.

WOLFF. Would you thank the child who ripped it open to show you it was only sawdust? (*goes on quickly*) Get a wooden doll if you can—solid wood throughout—that you can bang about—that nothing will spoil—a reliable doll. Percival Kingsearl is sound wood. I knew him when he was being knocked into shape. He may not be a prize doll, but he's wood—wood. Suppose he had been sawdust?—the only doll the child's got, and no getting another when that's broken!

MISS H. I think a woman is better without the sawdust doll. Society and I differ. The world regards marriage, even with the worst of men, an elevation for a woman. I regard it, even with the best, as but——

WOLFF. (*interrupting*) Excuse me—one moment! (*runs up companion ladder and disappears*)

(MISS H. *stands listening*)

(*heard calling*) Ahoy! Ahoy, there! Jessop, ahoy!

MISS H. (R., *goes to foot of ladder and listens—calling*) What's the matter?

(*There is a noise of chains being rattled, etc.*)

WOLFF. (*from above*) Old Sands was right in his croakings for once. The fog is round us like a sheet.

MISS H. Where are the others?

WOLFF. Can't see them anywhere. (*shouts*) Ahoy!

MISS H. Can anything have happened to them?

WOLFF. Oh, no, Jessop knows his work. (*coming down*) They are safe enough. It's ourselves we've got to think about.

MISS H. Why? Is anything wrong?

WOLFF. Well, I'm not sure—it's difficult to say anything for certain in this fog—but it feels as though we were trailing anchor.

MISS C. (L. C.) What does that mean?

WOLFF. (C.) That we are drifting.

MISS H. Where?

WOLFF. Out to sea, with the tide.

MISS H. Good gracious! What are we to do?

WOLFF. Sit still, and see where we are when the fog lifts.

MISS H. But suppose it doesn't lift all night?

WOLFF. See where we are in the morning. (*goes on to calm her*) There's no danger. We've plenty of sea room, and nothing will be coming up. If the wind doesn't rise, or the cable break——

MISS H. And if it does?

WOLFF. (*cheerfully*) Oh, well! we are bound to get picked up in the course of a day or two.

MISS H. This is terrible.

WOLFF. Nothing terrible—unpleasant, I admit, for both of us.

MISS H. You don't seem to realize the position I'm placed in.

WOLFF. I sympathise with you—I'm in the same myself.

MISS H. You! It doesn't matter to you!

WOLFF. I beg your pardon, it does matter to me. There happens to be a young lady in whose very attractive eyes (*is looking at her, but she is looking away from him*) I wish to appear all that is desirable. She is a particular young lady. Do you think a day or two's voyage with you will improve my chance?

MISS H. (*moves away* L.) I am very sorry. I did not think of it in that light.

WOLFF. It does not seem to be your habit to look at things from anybody's point of view but your own. (*cheerily*) But perhaps things won't be so bad. These fogs go as suddenly as they come. And if we haven't drifted far, I may be able to get her round with the jib. The thing to do is to make the best of it. How does the idea of coffee and chops strike you?

MISS H. Thank you, I am rather hungry. I didn't have much lunch.

WOLFF. (*goes to one of the cupboards at back* R. *and takes out a plate with two chops on it and a fork*) Sea air always makes me feel peckish. (*lays plate* C. *of table and looks across at stove*) The frying pan is on

the stove. The coals and wood you will find in the locker just behind you.

MISS H. (*is standing* L.—*in amazement*) I?

WOLFF. That's the idea. You fry the chops and make the coffee while I see to the yacht.

(*She looks at him, then quietly sits* L., *her back to the table and folds her hands*)

But that's not the way to do it.

MISS H. (*seated* L.) I have changed my mind. I do not want anything to eat.

WOLF. But I haven't. I do.

MISS H. There is the frying pan. The coals and wood you will find in the cupboard.

WOLFF. You refuse to do your share?

MISS H. I decline to be your general servant.

WOLFF. (*sits* R. *with his back to the table and folds his hands*) Very well, then, fog or no fog, I make no effort to get this yacht back to land. We drift.

(*She turns her chair and looks at him*)

I mean it. We can be here for an hour or a week. If I don't get my dinner—or rather if you don't get it for me—I don't work!

(*She looks at him, then slowly and with suppressed indignation she rises, marches to the plate, crosses with it to the stove, with a stab of the fork places first one and then the other of the chops in the frying pan.* WOLFF *rises, crosses a little to* C.)

MISS H. (*returns and places empty plate on table*)

You use your position of power to force me to become your drudge. And this is Nineteenth Century chivalry.

WOLFF. You want me to work for you—to do the work you can't do; and the work you can do—or, at all events, ought to be able to do, you won't. And that is the modern girl's notion of the whole duty of woman! I am going to fix the lamps and get the jib ready.

(*Exit up ladder*)

MISS H. (*as soon as he is out of sight*) Bully! (*goes to cupboard* L. *by stove and in silence takes out wood and paper, and rams them into stove, pushing*

frying pan aside. A kettle of water already stands there) I hope they'll give him indigestion. (*lights fire*) I do hate having anything to do with a stove.

(WOLFF *enters with ship's lantern in his hand, going to cupboard* L. *off door* R. *at back, he takes out oil and fills lamp at* R., *lower end of table.*)

MISS H. (*is kneeling at cupboard*) Do you possess a coal scoop with a handle?

WOLFF. (*at table* R.) There! I knew there was something I ought to have got. We broke it yesterday. I'll (*moves to go to her assistance, but at foot of ladder checks himself, hooking his arm round the ladder rope as if to restrain himself by force from following his instinct—says to himself, opening his mouth but no sound issuing*) "No, I'm damned if I do!"

MISS H. (L. *at stove, has seen him start and waits for him, but finds he comes no further*) Am I to put it on with my hands?

WOLFF. A woman's hands were not made only to be looked at. (*goes and puts oil back, keeping his eyes on her*)

(*With her hands* MISS H. *fills the broken shovel*)

(*Under his breath*) I do hope she doesn't cry! (*aloud, taking kettle of milk from cupboard and putting it on table*) Don't forget the milk!

(*Exit up ladder*)

MISS H. (*puts on coal and draws frying pan over opening*) If I wasn't hungry myself I'd burn them! (*goes to table, takes milk, puts it on with a bang*) That I should be cooking a man's dinner for him! (*goes to cupboard* R., *where she looks in vain for coffee*) If I didn't know it would please him I could cry! (*goes to foot of ladder and calls*) Mr. Kingsearl!

WOLFF. (*above*) Yes!

MISS H. There's no coffee.

WOLFF. No coffee! (*comes down and goes to cupboard*)

(MISS H. *comes down* R. C. *to* C.)

There was plenty there yesterday. (*takes out a bag of berries and shows her*)

MISS H. I thought it was a powder.

WOLFF. (*takes out and hands her grinder*) After you have ground it. You sit down.

(*She sits* R.)

take it between your knees——

(*She takes it*)

fill it with coffee (*pours in the berries*) and turn!

(*She begins to grind. He puts the coffee back and stands* R., *watching her*)

MISS H. (*seated* R.) Haven't you anything to do upstairs?

WOLFF. (R.) Not for the moment. (*pause*) You ought to be grateful to me.

MISS H. (*grinding*) I can't say I feel it.

WOLFF. One day you will.

MISS H. When I do, I'll let you know. (*she brushes past him to get the coffee pot out of cupboard* R., *then back of table to stove* L.)

WOLFF. (R. C.) Suppose you married a man who had to travel.

(*She makes a gesture of impatience*)

You would find yourself stranded in places where you would have to look after yourself. What would you do if you could not even make a cup of coffee?

MISS H. (*at stove with coffee pot*) You mean, I suppose, what would he do?

WOLFF. He, in all probability, would have ridden 50 miles to get it. What is your objection to men as a class?

MISS H. (*busy at stove*) That they take advantage of the accident of nature, their superior strength, to make woman their slave. (*bangs coffee pot down*)

WOLFF. Have you never met the man slave, the patient hack who grinds in his office for sixteen hours a day that some woman who despises him may live in idleness, surrounded by luxury? I have.

MISS H. They do it, I suppose, because they like it.

WOLFF. Because the woman takes advantage of the accident of nature—a pretty face, a rounded arm, to make the poor fool a mere machine for providing her with the means of gratifying her greed and vanity.

There are selfish, brutal men in the world, unfortunately. Because of this will you shut your eyes to the kindly decent fellow—the fathers the children run to? I have met many evil women. Am I to forget the good woman one looks for and finds wherever is needed a tender hand? What are you looking for—the table-cloth? (*is about to take it from cupboard and hand it to her*)

MISS H. (L. *of* C., *waves him aside and gets it herself*) Oh, pray don't exert yourself. I can do my own work. (*comes to* L. *end of table to lay cloth*)

WOLFF. (R. *of* C. R. *end of table*) I am glad to see that you are so eager to work. I was beginning to fear you had a constitutional objection to it.

MISS H. (*laying the cloth*) I don't object to work—work is good for everybody. It's the kind of work I object to. The man keeps all the interesting work for himself, and sets women to wash up the dishes.

WOLFF. (*shows her his hand, which is bleeding*) Now, look at that!

MISS H. Ah! it is bleeding. (*snatches out her handkerchief*) Let me—(*checks her impulse, and goes back to her work with a tight lip*)

WOLFF. I might say a woman leaves a man to haul wire ropes while she smooths a table cloth. Nature, not ourselves appoints our tasks; and after all it is the same work. Man bustles about the sea and land getting the world ready for the children. Woman bustles about the home getting the children ready for the world. What is the difference?

MISS H. (*is getting knives, forks, etc., from cupboard and laying them on table*) For some women, of course, marriage is all right. There are plenty of women who are fit for nothing better than to be mothers and look after children. (*at end of this speech,* MISS H. *must be up* R. *end of table, arranging knives and forks*)

WOLFF. Fit for nothing better! Fit for nothing better than to bear and train the men and women who are to rule the world. You think this writing of stories for the amusement of dolls on sofas—this lecturing from platforms of a world a million years old—this chattering and quarrelling about the pastime you call "Art," higher work than the teaching and guiding of living souls! Pray God, child, on your knees, that one day you may become that noblest and rarest of women, the woman who is fit to be a mother!—The milk is boiling over. (*springs across and rescues the boiling milk*)

MISS H. (R *end of table*) I'm so sorry, I ought to have been watching it.

WOLFF. (*back of table*, L. *end of it*) You had better let me pour it out. It's rather hot.

MISS H. (*holding jug while he pours*) You men are strange creatures. When I wanted you to help me you wouldn't. When I don't expect it, you do.

WOLFF. You might remember that, it is the key to a good deal. The fog looks to me as if it were lifting. I'll be down again in a minute. (*crosses back of her*)

(*Exit up ladder*)

MISS H. (*is finishing laying table with plates, cups and saucers, etc.*) I wonder if I am an idiot. I wonder if I should have had more sense if I had had a mother to talk to me. (*at stove*) I wonder if these chops are done.

(*Enter* WOLFF)

WOLFF. I believe the anchor is holding. It will be all right. Is the kettle boiling?

MISS H. It's singing. (*comes to* L. C. *in front of table*) Hadn't you better let me tie up your hand?

WOLFF. Oh, it's nothing, (*down* C.)

MISS H. It will get worse if I don't.

(*He holds it out to her, she tears her handkerchief in two and binds his palm and wrist*)

I suppose *she* is that sort of woman.

WOLFF. What sort of woman?

MISS H. The rare, noble woman, just fit to be a mother and all that.

WOLFF. (*still not recollecting*) Who is?

MISS H. Why she—the lady with the attractive eyes.

WOLFF. Oh, yes, I think she is, underneath it all. Thank you.

(*The binding is finished*)

MISS H. Underneath all what?

(*A boat bumping against the side of the yacht*)

JESSOP. (*heard coming from the sea*) Hulloa! are you there? (*his face appears framed in one of the port-holes* R.)

WOLFF. (*opening the porthole*) Hulloa! Where have you been?

JESSOP. Oh, puttering about. We got caught in the fog. Is Miss Hobbs there?

MISS H. (L. C.) Yes. Where's Milly?

MISS F. (*unseen*) Here I am, dear, are you ready?

MISS H. Yes, I'm coming. (*takes her gloves from* R. *end of table, crossing in front to foot of companionway*) I've been worried about you.

MISS F. Oh, you needn't, dear, I was all right with George.

WOLFF. You won't stop to taste your own cooking?

MISS H. Not now. Good-bye. (*shaking hands*) and thank you for your lesson.

WOLFF. I thought you would.

(*She has passed him and is at foot of ladder; he is prepared to follow her up—on the second step she turns*)

MISS H. Oh, Mr. Kingsearl, you dropped this climbing over the fence. (*hands him his betting book open at the page*) I hope you'll all three enjoy your dinner at Delmonico's on July 6th.

(*She runs up and disappears, leaving him standing at the foot of the ladder with the open book in his hand*)

WOLFF. Damn!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The same as Act I.*

TIME.—*7 p. m. in June.*

(BEULA, PERCIVAL *and* MISS FAREY *discovered. They are dressed for dinner party.* BEULA *sits* R. *end of settee,* L. C., PERC *stands behind her.* MISS F. *sits* R. C.)

PERC. (*back of settee*) The question is, will she come?

BEULA. Well, she promised.

MISS F. (*seated* L. *of table,* R. C.—*emphatically*) Then you can depend upon her.

BEULA. I appealed to her sense of justice. That is always the way to get round a woman. (*looking at* PERC.) You know that, don't you, dear?

PERC. (*fondling her*) Yes, darling.

BEULA. I said to her: "You have misjudged Percy. Now I want you to know him. Come and dine with us on Thursday."

MISS F. And what did she say?

BEULA. Well, the first thing she said was: "Is that man coming?"

MISS F. Yes, I can imagine her saying that.

BEULA. Just in that tone.

MISS F. How did you get out of it?

BEULA. (L. C.) Oh, I was awfully 'cute. I said, Well, of course, dear, if you don't wish it, I won't invite him." And I haven't.

MISS F. (R. C.) Then isn't he coming after all?

BEULA. I really couldn't tell you. Of course, if a stupid man—(*takes* PERCY'S *hand and lays her cheek against it*) knowing nothing about it all, meets another man and says: "Well, if you've nothing better to do, old fellow, look in and smoke a pipe with me on Thursday"—I can't be blamed for that.

MISS F. (*laughs*) Of course not. (*to* PERC.) And do you think he understood?

PERC. He understood. I took care of that.

MISS F. I do hope things will turn out all right. It would be such—— ,

PERC. (*listening*) Take care, perhaps this is she. (*goes over—leans against mantelpiece*)

(*The three assume attitudes of studied naturalness. Enter* MISS ABBEY, *shown in by* CHARLES)

CHARLES. Miss Abbey.

(*Exit and closes door*)

(MISS A. *comes down* R., PERC. *goes up and meets her*)

PERC. (*kisses her*) I am so glad you've come.

(MISS A. *crosses to* BEULA, L., MISS F. *crosses to* R. *of her*, PERC. *comes down* R. C.)

MISS A. (*carries a cap basket from which she takes cap and fixes it on her head*) I said I'd come, didn't I? (*kisses* BEULA *and* MISS F.) Is she coming? (*goes to glass and arranges cap*)

BEULA. (L. C.) Yes, we're expecting her every minute. (*looks at her watch*) I told her seven o'clock.

MISS A. And is he coming? (L.)

PERC. (R. C.) Yes, I told him half-past seven.

MISS A. (L., *at glass*) Then, when is dinner? Don't we get any at all?

BEULA. (L. C.) I'm afraid dinner will be a bit late to-day. You see, Aunt, our idea was to prepare her first.

MISS A. What for?—dinner? (*crosses to* L. C., *sits on settee*)

(MISS F. *back of settee*)

BEULA. (R. *end of settee*) No—for him.

MISS A. Oh! Well, from what I've seen of that young man, my advice would be to leave the whole business to him.

BEULA. Oh, but she won't see him at all. No, before he comes we must explain about that bet.

MISS F. (*back of settee*) That's what makes her so angry. She told me herself she could have forgiven everything else.

PERC. (R. C.) It's a jolly difficult thing to explain away. What on earth made him write it down?

BEULA. (*crosses a little to* C.) It was your fault, Percy. It wasn't a nice idea of yours.

PERC. I was so mad with her. I thought she was taking you away from me. (*she gives him her hand, he kisses her*)

MISS A. You are quite sure he wants it explained away?

BEULA. Oh, quite. "My dear Mrs. Percival," he said, and he was holding my hand and looking straight into my eyes——

MISS A. He would be.

BEULA. "My dear Mrs. Percival, I am thoroughly in earnest. She's a woman one could go tiger hunting with —she's the woman I want."—I felt so sorry for him.

(*Enter* JESSOP, *shown in by* CHARLES)

CHARLES. Mr. Jessop.

(*exit*)

JESSOP. (*comes down* L. C. *between* BEULA *and settee —shakes hands with her*) How do you do, Mrs. Kingsearl. (*with* MISS A.) How do you do, Miss Abbey? (*to* PERC., *crosses to* L. C.) I've been thinking as I came along—she hasn't come yet, has she?

PERC. (R. C.) Not yet.

(*All the others are gathered round* JESSOP)

JESSOP. (C.) Well, look here, instead of arguing with her—and perhaps saying the wrong thing——

MISS A. (L. C.) Yes, that's possible.

JESSOP. Wouldn't it be better——

BEULA. (*interrupting*) Hark! There's a carriage.

(*They fly apart.* MISS A. *and* MISS F. *sit on settee quickly;* JESSOP *and* PERC. *by table,* R. C.)

(*steals to window and peeps out*) Oh, it's only the ice pudding.

(*They return,* BEULA *comes down* R. C., *between* PERC. *and* JESSOP—MISS F., L. *of* JESSOP; MISS A. L. *of* MISS F.)

Yes, well?

JESSOP. Wouldn't it be better to treat the whole thing as a joke. (*he looks for sympathy, but finds silence*) Appeal to her sense of humour. (*the silence deepens*) What do you think, Miss Abbey?

MISS A. (L. *of settee*) I should first make sure that she's got it.

BEULA. (R. *of* JESSOP, *shaking her head*) No—I feel confident that would never answer. Why, even I can't see any joke in it, (*to* PERC., *who is* R. *of her*) and you know how keen my sense of humour is, don't you, dear?

PERC. (R.) Yes, darling.

BEULA. No, what we must impress upon her is that he has lived in the East. It's all the fault of his having lived so long in the East.

(*Their heads are all close together, the door* L. *opens and* MISS H. *enters unperceived, shown in by* CHARLES.

CHARLES. Miss Hobbs.

(*Exit and closes door*)

(*They spring apart like guilty conspirators. Their confusion tells the girl plainly that it is about her they have been talking. She is nervous and her manner is very distant. In their different ways all except* MISS A. *try to be gushing, but the situation is too much for them, and they feel awkward and confused.* MISS H. *comes to* C., BEULA *goes up to* R. *of her,* MISS

F. *to* L., MISS A. *sits on settee* L. C., JESSOP *crosses to back of settee,* PERC. *goes down* R. C.

BEULA. (*going to her and kissing her*) So good of you to come, dear.

MISS F. (L. *of her, kissing her—in a whisper*) It looks lovely, dear.

MISS H. (C.) I'm afraid I'm a little late.

BEULA. Oh, it doesn't matter. Dinner will be a bit late, as it happens. Let me introduce you to my husband—(*with a nervous little laugh*) my real husband.

(MISS H. *flashes a glance at her*)

I don't mean that—I mean—(*wishes she hadn't said it*) Percival, Miss Hobbs.

PERC. (R. C.; *bows*) Delighted.

BEULA. (*crosses to* L. C. *with* MISS H.) My aunt, Miss Abbey—Aunt, Miss Hobbs.

MISS A. (L. C., *has seated herself on settee and from her basket taken out her knitting—holds out her hand to* MISS H.) Glad to see you, my dear—and to find that you are not at all like what I took you for.

MISS H. (R. *end of settee—shakes hands—not sarcastically, but more from nervousness*) It's very kind of you to say so.

(JESSOP *has crossed to* L., *as* BEULA *and* MISS H. *cross to* L. C. MISS F. *has crossed, and is down* R. *with* PERC.)

MISS A. (*knitting*) Not at all.

BEULA. (R. *of* MISS H.) Mr. Jessop, you know.

MISS H. (*crosses* BEULA *to* JESSOP, C.) We have met before. (*shakes hands with him*)

JESSOP. (*placing chair from back of table for her* R. *of* C.) Won't you sit here?

(BEULA *sits on settee with* MISS A.)

MISS H. (R. *of* C.) Thank you. (*sits*)

PERC. (*comes round to* C., *not knowing what else to say*) Very irritating, these sea fogs we have been having of late.

MISS H. Very.

(JESSOP, *a little* L. *of* C., *crosses back of* PERC. *to back of* MISS H., *motions to* PERC. *to stop talking*)

PERC. (C.) They come down in a moment and make a yacht——

(JESSOP *has been vainly signalling to him, now kicks him—he stops suddenly, they whisper and go up* C. *Pause*—BEULA L., *with her mouth says to* MISS F.: "You say something."—MISS F., *also in silence, says:* "No, you, dear." BEULA *sits beside her aunt, whispers*)

MISS A. (*knitting*) One—two—three—four—ah, that's where I dropped it.

BEULA. (*makes up her mind to do it herself—she jumps up and goes across back of* MISS H., *and, drawing up a chair down* L. *of table* R. C., *sits beside* MISS H., *laying her hand on* MISS H.) I want to talk to you, dear, about Mr. Wolff Kingsearl.

MISS H. I would prefer a more interesting topic.

BEULA. We all like him so very much that we want you to like him, too. He is an awfully nice man when you know him. As for that silly bet——

(MISS H. *tries to rise,* BEULA *almost forces her back*)

No, dear I insist on your listening.

MISS H. (*sits resignedly*) If you insist——

(MISS F. *goes up to* C. *to* JESSOP—*they work down* L. C.)

BEULA. You must not judge him by the ordinary standard. You see he has been in the East.

MISS H. That's no excuse for his coming to the West and insulting the first woman he meets.

PERC. (*comes down* C.) Oh, but Miss Hobbs, there was no insult intended.

MISS H. Did he think I should regard it as an honour?

PERC. It was a thoughtless piece of folly, committed on the impulse of the moment.

MISS H. Was it the impulse of a moment that kept him talking to me for half an hour—that took him to my house—that prompted him to keep me all the evening boxed up in a pokey, stuffy little yacht—I don't believe the anchor ever did get loose (*turning suddenly to* MISS F. *and* JESSOP, *to their discomfiture*) Where were you two all the time?

(*They look at each other, their guilt renders them dumb*)

were you rowing about in the fog for pleasure, or was it all arranged? I think everybody has been very horrid to me.

BEULA. (R.) No, dear, we only want you to see the thing as it really is. Now, that bet, what was it, Percy?

PERC. (C.) Oh, well, we were talking—of course, none of us knew Miss Hobbs then—and, quite as a joke, I turned to him and said——

BEULA. Yes, I want the exact words.

PERC. I said—"I'll bet you a dinner that you don't kiss Miss Hobbs."

BEULA. That you *don't* kiss Miss Hobbs?

PERC. Yes, I bet him he wouldn't.

BEULA. There you are, dear. You have been misjudging him all along. He bet he wouldn't kiss you.

MISS H. (*stares at her*) Good gracious, did the man think I was going to worry him to? And, besides, it wasn't put that way. The words were, "That I kiss Miss Hobbs within a month." (*rises*) It makes me angrier every time I think of it. (*crosses to* C.)

(PERCY *crosses down* R. C., *and joins* BEULA)

JESSOP. (L. *of* C.) You must remember, Miss Hobbs, that when he took that bet he hadn't seen you. After he had seen you—I know for a fact he was real sorry he had made it.

MISS H. (C.) Thank you. I am sorry I was such a disappointment as all that.

MISS F. (*crosses in front of* JESSOP R. C.) Oh, no, dear, George didn't mean that. You didn't mean that, George?

JESSOP. (L. *of* MISS F.) Of course not. No, what I meant was that before he had seen Miss Hobbs—we had all of us quite the wrong notion of her—and we thought—he thought—she was a sort of woman a man wouldn't mind kissing.

MISS H. (*laughing in spite of herself*) Oh, please don't explain any more, Mr. Jessop.

MISS F. (L. *of* C.) No, dear, what it seems to me is this. He had heard about you, and he thought it would be a feather in his cap to kiss you. You know men don't think about these things as we do—to kiss a woman that no man has ever kissed before——

MISS H. (C). *How do you know?* You all talk as though I were some awful creature that no man would ever come near. It wasn't nice of you, Beula, to ask me

here merely for this. I won't listen to any of you any more.

(*Enter* WOLFF, *shown in by* CHARLES. *In the excitement, no one but* MISS A., *who is still knitting, sitting on settee—notices his entrance.* CHARLES *waits to speak, and* WOLFF *stands taking in the situation. He is dressed in light tweed travelling suit, and has hat and gloves in his hand*)

I never want to hear Wolff Kingsearl's name again, and I wish he'd go back to the East. Perhaps women over there like being made the subject of bets.

CHARLES. (*up* L. C., *taking advantage of pause*) Mr. Wolff Kingsearl.

PERC. (R. C.) Hulloa! Why, this is a surprise.

(MISS H. *turns her back—goes up to window* L. C.)

WOLFF. (*comes down from* C. *to* R. C., *to* PERC. *and* BEULA) I've just looked in to say good-bye.

BEULA. (R.) To say good-bye?

(MISS H. *at window, looking out, back to room*—MISS F. L. *end of settee,* JESSOP *down* L. C., BEULA, PERC. *and* WOLFF R.)

WOLFF. (R. *of* C.) I'm leaving by the eight o'clock train to-night.

BEULA. When are you coming back?

WOLFF. In about four years, I expect, I'll get my next leave.

(*A movement of* MISS H.'s *head shows she is listening*)

PERC. But——

(BEULA *and* PERC. *sink their voices and talk to him in a whisper*)

MISS A. (*on settee*) Milly, my dear, your legs are younger than mine. I wish you'd go down stairs for me.

(MISS F. *crosses over to her*)

(*aside*) Take your young man with you and stop there.

(MISS F. *nods, walks on tiptoe to* JESSOP)

(*They exeunt quietly*)

BEULA. (R.) But it's so sudden.

WOLFF. (C.) I fear my resolutions generally are.

PERC. (R. C.) You can surely stop to dinner.

WOLFF. Impossible—I must catch the eight o'clock train.

MISS A. (L. C.) There might be time for us to drink Mr. Wolff's health in a glass of champagne, Percy, if you went down stairs and opened it.

BEULA. Yes, do, my dear.

(PERC. *starts up* C. *to door* L.)

(*crosses to* C. *after him*) Bring it here.

PERC. (*at door*) Shall I?

MISS A. (*has put her knitting away and risen—crosses to* C.) Certainly not. We can't drink champagne in the drawing-room.

BEULA. Why not?

MISS A. (*takes* BEULA *by the shoulders and practically puts her out*) Because the proper place for us is the dining-room.

(*Exit* BEULA—PERC. *has already gone out*)

(MISS H., L., *has her back to room.* MISS A. *turns. In a moment* WOLFF *snatches the little old lady up and gives her a hug—she shakes her fist at him playfully and exits,* WOLFF *following her up to door*)

WOLFF. (*pauses up* L. C.) Won't you say good-bye?

MISS H. (*without turning*) Good-bye.

WOLFF. Won't you shake hands? We may never see each other again.

(*She turns very slowly, comes and gives her hand*)

There is one thing I should like to convince you of.

MISS H. I warn you beforehand that you will not succeed.

WOLFF. It is only this: that I did not mistake you for a lady's maid. I fancy for a while you were under the impression that I had. I should be sorry for you to think me so bad a judge of faces. Good-bye. (*drops her hand and moves away*)

MISS H. Before you go—(*comes down a little* R. C.)

(WOLFF *places his hat on table* L. C.—*promptly returns*)

There is one thing I should like explained.

WOLFF. (c.) It shall be—(*under his breath*) somehow.

MISS H. If—as it would seem—you were desirous of —(*hesitates*)

WOLFF. Of winning that bet—which I was——

MISS H. Then why, on every occasion, did you go out of your way to irritate and vex me?

WOLFF. (*comes close to her*) Would the conventional method of wooing the conventional young lady have succeeded better with you?

MISS H. (*quickly*) You told me you thought me a very ordinary type of woman.

WOLFF. As you say, I went out of my way to irritate you. I felt, the moment I saw you, that the stock compliments—the stock attentions a man keeps for most women, would be useless. Besides there was another reason.

MISS H. What was that?

WOLFF. It might make you still more indignant with me.

MISS H. I don't think it possible.

WOLFF. Have you ever looked in the glass when you were angry?

MISS H. I am not such a student of my glass as you evidently suppose me.

WOLFF. If ever you feel angry again—after I am gone—look into it. Note the flashing of your eyes under the level brows, the swift flush on the cheek, the slightly parted lips. Note the quick, imperious movement of the head, the curved line of the throat. You will understand how a man who has once seen you thus is tempted to make you angry again. Good-bye. (*moves away*)

MISS H. There is one other thing I would like to know——

WOLFF. (*returning*) What is that?

MISS H. What would the lady with the attractive eyes —"the somewhat particular young lady"—be likely to say should she hear of this—this sportsmanlike bet of yours?

WOLFF. That she never wanted to hear Wolff Kingsearl's name again. That she wished he'd go back to the East—Do you mean to say you didn't guess that?

MISS H. The idea did occur to me, but I reflected that the woman a man had made a jest of with his friends could hardly be the woman for whom he had regard.

(WOLFF *moves away*)

You admit it was not a nice thing to do?

WOLFF. Nice? It was infamous—disgraceful: to have made such a bet about any woman—would have been bad enough—to make it about you was a crime.

MISS H. There was no excuse for you.

WOLFF. None whatever.

MISS H. You see, even you yourself can't think of any.

WOLFF. You are right. I can't—there is none—except——

MISS H. (*eagerly*) Except what?

WOLFF. No—that is no excuse at all.

MISS H. I'm the best judge of that—let me hear it.

WOLFF. No—to a boy it might have been an excuse. A boy—quite unprepared for you—expecting something very different—might have had his head turned at first sight of you. For a boy—with your eyes haunting him—to have done any damned silly trick—I beg your pardon—would have been understandable. But a man of—seven and twenty doesn't lose his wits over a woman—or, if he does, he oughtn't to.

MISS H. That might have been an excuse——

WOLFF. That's what I say—it might have been, but it isn't.

MISS H. Because, as it happens, the—the silly trick was committed before you saw me.

WOLFF. "Before?" I don't understand you.

MISS H. (*moves away*) You made that bet, Mr. Kingsearl, before you ever set eyes on me.

WOLFF. (*after a pause*) I have done some foolish things in my life, I admit, but I'm not mad—not yet. And no one but a madman would announce his intention of setting to work to win for his wife a woman he had never set his eyes on.

MISS H. The bet merely said "to kiss."

WOLFF. Precisely. It takes two people to kiss. I could not suppose for a moment you would permit such a salute from any but the man to whom you were engaged. (*sees the impression he has made and goes on*) That bet, in other words, meant, "I have just seen and talked to—here, in this very room, the most bewitching, the most piquante, and the most exasperating girl in the world. You fellows think that, because every strutting coxcomb is not to her fancy, that no man will win her. It's madly conceited of me to dream of it, but I believe I might. Anyhow, I'm going to try, heart and

soul." No man should have written such sacred thoughts as these in a betting book. He should have reflected upon the indignity to which he was exposing her whom it should be his privilege to honour with his highest thoughts. To say that his brain was dancing wildly at the time, is no excuse. It oughtn't to have been dancing wildly—not as wildly as all that.

Miss H. The others are quite under the impression that you took the bet before you saw me.

Wolff. They were unaware of your visit here, and their estimate of my sanity appears to have been on a par with your own. When the bet was first suggested, I laughed at the idea, and dismissed it. The moment they left the room, you came. It was after you had gone I wrote it down.

Miss H. It was very sudden.

Wolff. What, the bet?

Miss H. No—your—liking for me.

Wolff. Love always is at first sight. It's in the finding it out that people waste so much time. Well, this has been of some use to me. It has shown me the evils of betting. Few men have lost more than I—good-bye. (*takes up hat from table and makes resolutely for the door*)

Miss H. You still persist in your programme of vexing me.

Wolff. (*by door*) How?

Miss H. By going. (*she says this in a half whisper, with the suggestion of a sob in her voice, and moves away* R.)

Wolff. (*puts down his hat and comes back to her —now he is quite serious*) This is not a trick. I have to go. Not for a week or two, I need not, but soon. I have been offered a very important appointment. But it may mean occasionally roughing it.

Miss H. (R. *of* C.) Could you put up with my coffee? (*her face is still turned away from him*)

Wolff. (C.) It would be the most delicious coffee in the world.

(*She turns to him. Enter* Charles)

Charles. (*up* L. C.) Oh, I beg pardon. I thought everybody was here.

Wolff. (*confused this time*) Oh—aren't they? Oh, no—so they are not. I really don't know where they are, Charles.

(*Enter* Beula, *followed by* Perc., *door* L.)

BEULA. (*up* L. C.) Oh, is dinner ready, Charles.
CHARLES. (C.) Yes, mum. Cook says shall she dish up?
BEULA. Yes, certainly—at once.

(*Exit* CHARLES)

(*Enter* MISS ABBEY, *comes down* L. C. *to settee*)

MISS A. I think we shall all be glad of it.
MISS H. (R. *of* C., *to* BEULA) If you don't mind, dear, I don't think I'll stop to dinner.
PERC. (L. C.) Not stop! Oh, nonsense!
BEULA. (L. *of* C.) Not stop!

(*Enter* MISS F. *and* JESSOP—*they work down* R. C.)

MISS H. (R. *f* C.) No, dear, I feel I should like to go home and—Please forgive me, dear, I don't feel hungry to-night.
BEULA. It will be such a disappointment to us all.
MISS H. I'm so sorry, dear, I don't feel I could eat anything to-night. Instead, let us all go to New York to-morrow and dine at Delmonico's. (*goes to* WOLFF, C., *and kisses him*) Your husband will pay.

(*Exit*)

WOLFF. I may look in later on. (*snatches up his hat*)

(*Exit after* MISS H.)

(*The five stand looking at each other*)

CURTAIN.

The Return of Hi Jinks

A comedy in four acts, by Marion Short, author of "The Varsity Coach," "The Touch-Down," etc. 6 males, 8 females. Costumes modern. One interior scene.

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Gwen
Mrs. Ralston
Ethel
Mable
Sable
Martha

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ACT 1. A Broker's Office
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